RETURN TO SIMPLICITY: HOW CHRIST'S LIFE OF VOLUNTARY POVERTY INFORMS A DISCIPLESHIP OF DESCENT

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ABSTRACT

RETURN TO SIMPLICITY: HOW CHRIST'S
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The focus of the ministry research sought to discover what elements are necessary to form Millennials into disciples who embrace a lifestyle of simplicity and altruistic service in solidarity with Jesus' kenotic value of voluntary poverty. A qualitative case study was implemented utilizing mixed methods consisting of survey questionnaires and interviews to define and measure altruism and simplicity behaviors in a discipleship model of descent. Accountability exercised within mentoring relationships accompanied by biblical teaching and exposure to human and environmental need is integral to shifting values into behaviors in formulating a discipleship of descent that emulates Christ's example in self-emptying.

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ABBREVIATIONS

COPE	Cost of Poverty Experience
KAC	Kentucky Annual Conference
LINK	Living Incarnationally and Networking for the Kingdom
LWC	Lindsey Wilson College
RROKI	Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky Inc.
TOM	The Order of Mission
UMC	United Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning this dissertation has been a process of discovery. It began with the idea of exploring how a fresh but historically faithful interpretation of the three great Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience might hold potential to revitalize the Church. It ended with a revelation regarding the factor that emerged as most integral to genuine spiritual formation in a project targeted to emerging adults. It is the sincere hope that the implications from the findings of the research will be of interest to pastors and church leaders whose ministry and calling is to make disciples.

In a provocative thesis, *Transforming Worldviews*, Paul Hiebert suggests that conversion to Christ must encompass more than just beliefs and behaviors. He suggests that a person's worldview also must be converted if Christianity is to produce genuine disciples patterned upon the biblical worldview of the kingdom of heaven.[1] This raises questions regarding the degree of enculturation experienced by a twenty-first century Western Church and the possibility that the Church might be amiss in its understanding of discipleship. What were the parameters of discipleship defined by Jesus? Is it possible that Western Christian spirituality is misinformed with regard to the demands of the gospel and is practicing an enculturated Christian witness that has been shaped more by Western values of extreme individualism and independence? How disparate might be a Western culture of unprecedented affluence from the worldview of Jesus Christ and what

[1]Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 315.

are the implications such affluence might have for a biblically faithful stewardship?

The idea of an indolent and self-indulgent twenty-first century Western Christian spirituality in need of reformation is not new. Books from authors such as Francis Chan, David Platt, Kyle Idelman, and Steven Furtick have been dominating the Christian best-seller lists for the last five years.[2] In a March 2013 issue of "Christianity Today," Matthew Lee Anderson underscores how these authors' radical messages have, "tapped into a widespread dissatisfaction with many Americans' comfortable, middle-class way of life and the Christianity that so easily fits within it."[3]

At issue is the idea that American Christianity has become syncretized with the self-referential values indicative of Western radical autonomy and economic exclusivity, and this enculturation has insulated the Church toward its responsibility to embrace simplicity. Simplicity is learning to live responsibly in light of known human and environmental need in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty. It is the author's thesis that the Church needs to return to a lifestyle of simplicity if it is to faithfully reflect Jesus' call to a Matthean 16:24 discipleship of self-denial, service, and obedience. A return to the Christian discipline of simplicity is a requirement if the Church hopes to regain the moral and spiritual authority needful to witness effectively and to justly address global and environmental issues.

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[2]Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008). David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010). Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011). Steven Furtick, *Greater: Dream Bigger. Start Smaller. Ignite God's Vision for Your Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2012).

[3]Matthew Lee Anderson, "Here Come the Radicals!", *Christianity Today*, March 2013, 22.

The need for American Christians to return to a lifestyle of simplicity and altruistic service in solidarity with Jesus' value in self-emptying was the impetus for the creation of the project model known as LINK, *Living Incarnationally and Networking for the Kingdom*. With the help of a grant from the Lilly Endowment, LINK was established on the campus of Lindsey Wilson College for the purpose of linking emerging adults to a personal commitment to live simply and to practice responsible stewardship. The mission of LINK was to provide a communal context where students could form strong relational ties and be challenged to adopt new values and behaviors.

The following chapters discuss the subject of simplicity and themes of descent in light of Christ's value of voluntary poverty. Chapter one traces the origins of an Eastern desert spirituality in the author's life and examines current contexts for a project model on discipleship. The synergy of these two topics converge in a discussion of the three great Evangelical Counsels and the potential they hold for revitalization.

Chapter two examines biblical foundations related to the subject of voluntary poverty and themes of descent such as the *kenosis* and Christ's descent into hell. Chapter two also looks at how the Church's mission is grounded in a Trinitarian understanding of perfect love. Chapter three traces the three ways the Church historically has interpreted the Evangelical Counsel of voluntary poverty through monasticism, asceticism, and simplicity. Chapter four discusses theological foundations in light of Wesley's teachings regarding wealth and Douglas Meek's understanding of Christian stewardship. Current conversations related to simplicity and discipleship will be examined through the lens of New Monasticism and other missional movements within the emergent church in chapter five. Lastly, chapter six presents a detailed description of the project model,

methodology, and findings from the research. Chapter six ends with a summary of learnings and a discussion of the central discovery from the project.

CHAPTER ONE

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Every person bears a divine fingerprint that is uniquely crafted by God throughout one's life to help shape human personality. This fingerprint, which is a composite of a lifetime of grace and human responsiveness, becomes more evident through the process of writing a spiritual autobiography. Like the classic Christian discipline of examen, the process of prayerful self-reflection in spiritual autobiography acts much like a mirror that allows one to see God's greater overall plan. Recognizing the movement of God throughout one's life journey aids in identifying those values and interests peculiar to one's identity and calling.

Over the past year the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary has been a process of distillation. Repeatedly I have been challenged to identify and narrow the unique ministry foci that would reflect the peculiarities of my own spiritual life pilgrimage. After a year of intense and prayerful introspection I discovered repetitive patterns and themes which pointed to a classic desert spirituality more in keeping with Eastern Orthodox Christian spirituality.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity is a spirituality of the desert. It is characterized by a deep reverence for God as Trinity, an intense identification with the sufferings associated with Christ's passion and an appreciation for God's love and compassionate distress for

the poor and disenfranchised.[1] It also tends toward a more literal interpretation of discipleship that manifests in a complete forsaking of all possessions and the willingness to bear a cross.

The breadth of exposure to other cultures and religions contributed in a major way to shaping my worldview and introducing me to the economic, social, political, and religious disparities between East and West. From my earliest years I was profoundly impacted from having lived in majority world nations. Living and traveling in nations such as Haiti, Pakistan, India, and Turkey were formational in shaping my underlying values and assumptions. Having witnessed the most abject of human suffering and misery it was natural to become predisposed toward a compassionate distress for the poor and to appreciate the very real existence of evil and its reach through human beings and institutions.

The process of spiritual autobiography also has made me aware of a propensity toward idealism. In reflection upon spiritual pilgrimage I realized that one source of this idealism came as a result of experiencing God's faithfulness to answer prayer or to intervene in redemptive ways. These actions upon the part of God to rescue and redeem lay the foundation for a strong assurance in his goodness, provision, and protection. Therefore I believe God's divine fingerprints can be seen no matter the nature of given circumstances. God has power to work everything for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

The impact of the Lord's Prayer taught me about the value of forgiveness and the exercise of mercy. If grace is an extension of God's favor without respect to whether or

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[1]Catherine de Hueck Doherty, *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974).

not it is deserved, mercy is the extension of unconditional love devoid of deserved retribution. It is my belief that when exercised both love and mercy are attributes which make the heavenly Father known to a world which is alienated and estranged from God and blind to his perfections. When the Church exercises mercy through humanitarian ways that alleviate human need or correct injustices then the Father's providential love and goodwill become tangible and visible. These actions foster a greater receptivity to God's love and predispose lost souls toward God. Mercy is the first attribute God cites about himself to Moses in the revelation of his glory. Ex 34:6

Another very significant part of my spiritual pilgrimage was coming to learn about the role of the Church. It was not until the age of nineteen that I became aware of and involved in the Church. Answering a call to ministry was probably the most important spiritual event in my life outside of my actual encounter with Jesus at the age of four. As an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church the practice of ministry has helped make me more aware of God's presence as lived through the Church and of God's passion for humanity.

Jesus taught that love was to be one of the chief marks of a disciple. *Agape* is a love that can be commanded. For the disciple relationships become a matter of obedience. Disciples are commanded to reach out to those whom society has excluded or stigmatized. The poor, the least, the ugly, the outcast, the rebel, even our enemies, are to be within the reach of God's *agape* as incarnated through Christ's Church. As ministers of reconciliation our relationships are no longer to be governed by natural human inclinations to group or herd. Christ's followers are to exercise God's love for humankind

by reaching out to include and make room for those with whom we might feel some social discomfort or with whom we feel culturally unfamiliar. This kind of love is other-ward in its focus and it is the supreme value of the Christian life.

The themes of poverty, social justice, compassion, altruism, and love are marks of God's divine fingerprints upon my life and they are integral to shaping the particular ministry focus of a discipleship of descent. The actions of descent in the life of Christ signal a holiness characterized by love, humility, willingness to sacrifice, and submission to authority. Throughout the process of research I have come to believe Christian discipleship must reflect themes of descent as lived by Christ through a lifestyle of simplicity. Christ's life of voluntary poverty informs the caliber of our discipleship. If we can embrace simplicity in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty we will be true to his call to a discipleship comprised of self-denial, cross-bearing, and obedience. My purpose in designing the doctoral project was to create a model that would help emerging adults embrace simplicity by adopting Jesus' value of voluntary poverty and emulate his actions in descent.

The term "voluntary poverty" will summarize both the values and lifestyle behaviors that make up Jesus Christ's actions in his Incarnation, earthly ministry, and in his descent into hell. A value is understood to be something one considers to be important in life. Values do not necessarily translate into behaviors. People can agree on the importance of something but not necessarily conform their lives in response. Many Christians listen to sermons every Sunday and agree with the messages' concepts, but that does not necessarily mean they will make the lifestyle changes that accord with righteousness.

The term "simplicity" will refer to lifestyle behaviors of disciples who have embraced Christ's call to a Matthean 16:24 discipleship comprised of self-denial, service, and obedience. The Christian discipline of simplicity is the practice of living responsibly in light of known human and environmental need. I have come to believe that the voluntary poverty lived by Christ should inform the values and behaviors of all disciples and be evidenced through a lifestyle of altruistic service and simplicity. The term "discipleship of descent" refers to the lifestyle of altruistic service and simplicity which results when a follower of Jesus Christ obeys Christ's call to self-denial, service, and obedience.

CONTEXT

This section will offer an overview of some of the contextual elements related to the doctoral project. The project took place on the campus of a small rural college located on the edge of the Cumberland plateau in Columbia, Kentucky. Lindsey Wilson College (Lindsey) is affiliated with the United Methodist Church of the Kentucky Annual Conference (KAC). Various lenses as presented by Nancy T. Ammerman in her book, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, have been used to provide systematic ways to critically evaluate and reflect upon the culture, geopolitical and social environment, customs, and financial and human resources which make up Lindsey and the KAC.[2]

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[2]Nancy T. Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Since its inception in 1968 the United Methodist Church (UMC) within the United States has experienced attrition. Within the ten years alone between 1998 and 2008 the decline in membership was seven percent.[3] In an attempt to address this disturbing trend the 2008 General Conference of the UMC delineated four areas of focus. These foci include an emphasis on developing leaders, making room for new members while revitalizing existing congregations, compassionate care for the poor, and alleviating disease by improving conditions that promote health.[4]

The issue of membership decline has been given serious attention by the leadership of the Kentucky Annual Conference. In an address given in August of 2011 at United Theological Seminary, Bishop Violet Fisher shared that fifty-five percent of United Methodist members are age fifty years or older. This means that not only is the UMC experiencing a decline in the number of professing members but the church as a whole is an aging denomination, one-third of whose members presently are age sixty-five or older.

The KAC staff has been working assiduously to address decline by redistributing its diminishing financial and human resources around the four-fold foci adopted by the 2008 General Conference. Efforts toward this end include KAC staff reductions and a further streamlining of the number of districts and district superintendents. Currently the

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[3]The People of the United Methodist Church, "2010 State of the Church: Membership," http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.6072819/k.2327/Membership.htm (accessed December 16, 2011).

[4]Ibid.

KAC has approximately 831 churches with 150,000 members spread across twelve districts.

A crisis in leadership is the KAC's foremost concern. Within thirteen years fifty percent of the clergy who are presently serving in churches across Kentucky will have retired. Therefore the KAC has implemented new initiatives such as the Isaiah Project to recruit and develop principled young leaders. The Isaiah Project works to recruit young people interested in ordained ministry by providing experiences in various ministry contexts such as paid summer internships. The KAC works with UM affiliated colleges, youth groups, and churches to help identify and recruit young people who are interested in exploring a call to the ordained ministry.

The United Methodist Church is episcopal with respect to its polity. The UMC affirms two orders of ordained ministry, deacons and elders, but maintains there are three offices. The third office is the position of bishop. The bishop's office is chiefly administrative in its oversight of the temporal and spiritual affairs of the church. One strength of this model is its structure of accountability. This structure is referred to as the "connection", because all clergy and members are integrated and accountable to one another at some level across the entire denomination. This cross-pollination of gifts produces a synergy that is greater than the sum of it individual parts. The connection creates a larger pool of resources from which to draw and forms a venue for a wider distribution of ideas or ministries that are global in their reach.

Methodist doctrine affirms the beliefs of the early church as formalized in the Apostles' and Nicene creeds concerning God's triune nature, Christ's atoning work, promised return, and coming judgment. Historic Methodist doctrine also remains true to

the spirit of the Reformation especially as it pertains to the primacy of scripture and the doctrine of justification by faith alone through grace.[5]

John Wesley drew his thinking and formulated his religious sensibilities from a wide spectrum of Christian teaching and practice. In his book, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*, Thomas A. Langford discusses the broad scope of classic Christian faith, witness, and literature that form the underpinnings of Methodist theological tradition.[6] Wesley studied the doctrinal teachings of the early church, Eastern Orthodoxy, the patristic fathers, and German pietism. He meditated upon the lives of saints whose biographies testified to a uniform commonality of Christian faith and experience. In addition to this broad distillation of classical Christian thought, Wesley added his own theological distinctives such as "preventing grace", the method of salvation, assurance, and entire sanctification.

Methodism affirms the traditions of the canonical church. Methodism is known for its ecumenical spirit and an emphasis on community transformation through personal holiness, corporate accountability, and social justice. Strengths that can be identified are its doctrinal purity, its theological distinctives such as Wesley's teachings on prevenient grace and the way of salvation, its ecumenical spirit, its strong social mission, its rich hymnody, and its connectional system. The doctrinal positions of United Methodism have always been within the larger context of classical Christianity.

Because of the concern regarding issues related to aging and membership decline as expressed above, the KAC is supportive of efforts geared toward revitalization and

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[5]Ted A. Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

[6]Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 216.

renewal. It is an imperative within the denomination overall to develop the wineskins needful to disciple emerging adults who reflect John Wesley's ecumenical spirit, accountability, and commitment to social holiness. The doctoral project was designed to address the foci delineated by the 2008 General Conference by creating a model of discipleship that focuses on developing emerging adult leaders who exemplify Christ's selflessness through their choice of a lifestyle characterized by altruistic service and simplicity.

Lindsey Wilson College

My husband and I first moved to south central Kentucky in 1984. Both of our long tenures in ministry within the community and surrounding region have included pastoring, teaching, community involvement and volunteering, serving within local congregations as speakers and workshop leaders, Sunday School teachers, Christian Education director of a large established congregation, accountant for a CPA firm, and administrative office assistant for the Columbia District of the United Methodist Church (UMC). Twenty-nine years of vocational, community, and ministry service within south central Kentucky lend a legitimacy for historical perspective and interpretation relating to cultural shifts and institutional growth.

For the last thirteen years I have been teaching religion classes at Lindsey Wilson College (Lindsey) in the department established by my husband, Dr. Terry Swan. I also have worked with students outside of the classroom to give leadership for women's conferences, retreats, and prayer groups on the campus along with KAC related events that offer Continuing Education Credits for UMC clergy and leadership for lay training.

Currently I meet each week with several young women to offer my gifts of encouragement and support in a mentoring relationship. The department staff also have committed to meeting three times each week for worship, prayer, and discipleship.

Locale

Lindsey Wilson College is a United Methodist affiliated college located in south central Kentucky. According to census data, the small rural community of Columbia where Lindsey is located has experienced little shift in numbers with regard to its population over the last twenty-five years.[7] However, this statistic does not necessarily mean that the community has not experienced growth. A large demographic shift in the average age listed for Columbia's residents suggests that the city experienced growth with respect to a younger more affluent population moving in during a time of attrition due to death among the older residential population. The city has experienced steady economic growth in terms of the many new businesses and restaurants that have opened and new subdivisions that have been developed since the 1980's. One implication of this demographic shift includes a city culture more open and welcoming to integration with the young professional community of Lindsey Wilson College.

The city of Columbia is situated on the edge of what is known as the Cumberland Plateau which is a geographic location bordering Appalachia. Appalachia is known sociologically for a lack of opportunities due in part to its isolation, systemic poverty, and poor education. Over the course of the college's history since its establishment in 1903, Lindsey has made a noticeable impact on the quality of life and standard of living among

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[7]+15.2% since 2000; City-data.com, "Columbia, Kentucky", http://www.city-data.com/city/Columbia-Kentucky.html (accessed December 16, 2011).

the Appalachian constituents it was meant to serve. Many alumni have testified with gratitude to being the first person in their respective families to have been granted the opportunity to attend college and graduate with a degree.

The demographic shift in the average age of Columbia's residents noted earlier means that the culture surrounding Lindsey has changed. The community now is much more open to the new ideas and opportunities a high-energy educational institution has to offer. The college is considered conservative in its values and this is a commonality it shares with the surrounding culture. South central Kentucky residents place a high value on family ties and their native communities. They tend to be close knit and ingrown making it harder for outsiders to fit in. They also are fiercely loyal to their own small membership churches where their families have worshiped for generations.

Institutional Development

Twenty-five years ago Lindsey Wilson College transitioned from a two-year institution, which initially offered a total of three majors, to a four-year university that offers thirty majors and three graduate degree programs. It currently has a population of 1300 residential students and 1800 commuter students.

The transition from a two-year associate degree-granting junior college to a four year undergraduate and graduate degree-granting university can be traced almost directly to the entrepreneurial and maverick caliber of leadership under its sixth president, Dr. John Begley. Begley was hired in 1978 to save the college from closing due to low enrollment and financial mismanagement. As a result of Begley's visionary leadership the campus has quadrupled in both its physical plant and student enrollment.

The first item on Begley's agenda was to initiate a massive campus renovation and building campaign. To initiate a rebuilding of Lindsey's physical plant and a remapping of its physical spaces during a time of severe financial crisis in the life of the college indicated an entrepreneurial style of leadership which was high in its willingness to take risks. Thirty years later this maverick style of leadership still continues to energize the campus and inform its style of operations. A willingness to take risks tends to attract energetic, creative, and visionary people. New ideas are more likely to become reality in an atmosphere that is characterized by unlimited possibility-thinking. It is this insight into the intrinsic logic of Lindsey which this writer believes led to the creation of Lindsey's most successful degree granting programs: the Human Services and Christian Ministries majors.

As is common to catalytic leaders, Dr. Begley tried to hire people who were energetic and filled with new ideas. One such person who came on board in 1984 was Dr. Terry Swan. In his position as Academic Dean, Swan was integral in the early years of John Begley's leadership to helping the college transition from a two-year to a four-year institution. He also created and helped oversee both the Human Services and Christian Ministries degree programs. Currently the Human Services major is the flagship program for Lindsey in terms of its national prominence and student enrollment. Both programs together bring in seven million dollars in revenue annually to the college.

Christian Ministries Department

Since its establishment in 2000 the Christian Ministries department has grown from one staff member to five full time faculty and ten adjuncts. Staff positions include a

Dean of the Chapel, Chaplain, Assistant Chaplain, and four graduate Assistant Chaplains. Four new buildings which facilitate the classes and spiritual life programs at the college also have been built since 2000. Two-hundred fifty students have graduated with under-graduate degrees in Christian Ministries and twenty-seven students have graduated with graduate degrees in Christian Leadership. Ten of the twenty-seven graduate students have gone on to study at seminaries. The students who make up the Christian Ministries major are from all backgrounds with respect to ethnicity, social class, education, and gender. Several of the students are from Europe and Africa. All students enrolled as freshmen at Lindsey are required to take a religion class in basic Christian beliefs.

The same creative, visionary, and high-risk style of leadership characterized by Dr. John Begley is very evident in the make-up of the Christian Ministries department at Lindsey. One implication of this style of leadership is that it is more likely the department staff will welcome and consider new paradigms with regard to its mission to equip and disciple future leaders of the Church.

The Christian Ministries department at Lindsey is evangelical in its theology. It works to provide a genuine witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ through chapel services and campus outreaches. This is in keeping with the college's greater mission statement, which reads:

> The mission of Lindsey Wilson College is to serve the educational needs of students by providing a living-learning environment within an atmosphere of active caring and Christian concern where every student, every day, learns and grows and feels like a real human being.[8]

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[8]Lindsey Wilson College, "Mission", http://www.lindsey.edu/about-lwc/mission.aspx (accessed December 16, 2011).

Opportunities for participation in Christian service abound. Prayer and Bible studies that are coordinated and led by students are an integral part of the overall work of ministry. Special outreaches both to the campus and local community are held each semester. Most of the spiritual life activities are planned in collaboration with young leaders in the Christian Ministries degree program. For example, each year a young team of leaders are trained to plan for and conduct a mid-week worship service which purpose is to connect to the larger campus community. A strong emphasis within the Christian Ministries program lies in its commitment to make disciples and develop strong leaders who will commit to a lifetime of altruistic service irrespective of their chosen vocations in relation to the Church.

Some of the challenges that face the Christian Ministries department involve building and maintaining authentic community in the midst of a continually changing congregation. Every year sees the launching of seasoned leaders. The challenge is to build models where new and immature young adults can be mentored to a place where they begin to assume responsibility for the growth and sustainability of the spiritual life on campus.

Another challenge involves the rural location of the campus. Although it is at the center of Lindsey's mission to service the unmet educational needs of rural Appalachia, Lindsey's marginalized location limits its ability to expose students to a diversity of opportunities for service that are urban in nature and focused on meeting human need. Therefore the staff began to consider ways to better interface students with urban missions in both Lexington and Louisville, two of Kentucky's largest metropolitan centers.

Millennials

The group of emerging adults that currently makes up the majority of the student body on the campus of Lindsey belongs to the generation known as the Millennials. The Millennials encompass young adults whose birth years range between 1980 and 2000. As future leaders who will soon occupy the central places of cultural influence in areas such as religion, business, government, finance, and education, they are poised to become the most significant generation since the Boomers in terms of impact upon our nation.[9] Therefore it is essential that the Church comes to understand some of the commonalities shared by the Millennials so that it can better strategize for disciple-making and mission.

Commonalities shared by Millennials include their optimism about the future and the desire to make a difference with their lives. They are highly relational and extremely sophisticated in their communication skills and mastery of social technology. They also are the most educated and diverse group of any previous generation. Thirty-three percent of Millennials prioritized getting an education and establishing a career as most important in their lives.[10] Among emerging adults who are twenty-five to twenty-nine years old, thirty percent already have attained a college degree. This statistic is the highest for any previous generation's similar age group.[11] From a discipling standpoint, this makes college campuses ideal for targeting emerging adults at a time when they are figuring out their values and choosing vocations.

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[9]Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 2. 77.9 million live births were recorded between 1980 and 2000. This makes the Millennials the largest generation in American history seconded by the Boomers' record of 75.9 million recorded live births.

[10]Ibid., 229.

[11]Ibid., 3.

Millennials also are more ethnically diverse than any previous American generation. Respondents to a national survey conducted by LifeWay Research in 2010 were comprised of Whites by sixty-one percent, African-Americans fourteen percent, Hispanics nineteen percent, Asians five percent, and mixed one percent.[12] The diversity inherent in this generation of Millennials already is having an impact on disciple-making. Their greater ethnic diversity is helping to equip the American Church to be more effective in cross-cultural contexts.

Of concern to the Church however is the utter non-interest Millennials exhibit toward religion or spirituality. Only thirteen percent of Millennials consider any type of spirituality to be important to their lives.[13] They are more likely to delay marriage and sixty-five percent opt to co-habit at least once before marriage.[14] In the areas of both religion and relationships research shows that Millennials tend to be broad in scope but shallow in depth. They tend to form a multiplicity of relational connections but most of those relationships are not very deep with respect to genuine intimacy and accountability.

Out of 1200 responses in the national LifeWay Research study, eighty-six percent or roughly four out of every five Millennials prioritized family and friends as the most important things in life.[15] The significance of relationships and the need for belongingness cannot be underestimated with this generation. In a whitepaper on mobilizing the Millennials for discipleship and mission, co-authors Doug Paul and Jo Saxton comment, "Rather than looking for the most money, the perfect job or their

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[12]Rainer, *The Millennials*, 4-5.

[13]Ibid., 22.

[14]Ibid., 3.

[15]Ibid., 229.

favorite city, they (the Millennials) are saying this: "It's not where you go, its who you go with."[16]

The same superficiality which characterizes Millennial's relationships pertains equally to their understanding of Christian orthodoxy. Of the fifty-seven percent of Millennials who claimed that the person of Jesus was important to their lives, only six percent demonstrated any real knowledge of Jesus' life and death or of his work of atonement.

These findings carry implications with respect to creating a culture of discipleship on the campus of Lindsey Wilson College. The Christian Ministries department staff will need to look for ways to integrate greater accountability and build communities that emphasize genuine caring and sound doctrine. The Rainers found that ninety-six percent of Millennials believe they can do something great with their lives but that almost nine out of ten expressed they have a lot of unused talent.[17] This means the Millennials are ready to respond to a high invitation/high challenge brand of discipleship that is radical in its devotion to Christ and genuine in terms of action and service. They desire community and require accountability. They need sound teaching. A discipleship culture based on high invitation and high challenge should resonate with this generation.

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[16]Doug Paul and Jo Saxton, "Mobilizing the Missing Generation: Reaching Western Culture in an Age of Optional Discipleship", http://tomproject.org/explore-more/whitepaper (accessed August 29, 2013), 7.

[17]Rainer, *The Millennials*, 273.

SYNERGY

The intersection of repetitive themes and patterns in a spiritual autobiography in light of current contexts of ministry helped spotlight the particular topics that shaped the final research project. It was found through the process of spiritual autobiography that God had been developing gifts for teaching, service and discipleship. Of particular interest were the kenotic values in the life of Christ. These values are reminiscent of an Eastern Christian spirituality, and they inform Christ's call to the Church to live a discipleship characterized by simplicity and altruistic service.

In looking back over my spiritual journey I became aware of how much of my life was one of separation. Spiritually, emotionally, socially, culturally, and even with respect to gender as I was the only girl out of five children, separation was a constant theme in my life. This separation contributed to a deep systemic loneliness and a desire for belongingness. Through both the love of my family and children and later through the sisterhood of Aglow I experienced the healing power of *koinonia*, the loving relational bonds formulated through genuine Christian community. God's plan for Christian communities of compassionate love and caring is that they become oases of healing and hope where God's children can find the resources and support they need to grow up into wholeness of human personality and glorify God through their lives.

Genuine Christian community is found through cultivating a climate of love where the relational bonds between people become truly covenantal. It is cultivated through intentional efforts to create contexts where people share public, social, and

personal spaces.[18] When time is structured so that persons share common spaces where they engage in work or in both public and private social interpersonal relationships meaningfulness arises as a shared outcome. A cohesive quality begins to emerge much like that found in families. The ties are such that people tend to pursue relationship even after having achieved the common purpose for which originally they had been organized.

This type of community resonates deeply with the generation of Millennials currently occupying college campuses. The desire for belonging coupled with emerging adults' desire for authentic community made the context of a college campus a good choice for a discipleship project that centered on developing the relational ties necessary to embed a culture with the values of Jesus.

Another aspect that contributed to the identification of a project focused on a discipleship of descent was my attraction to the desert spirituality of the early Church. In her book, *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man*, Catherine de Hueck Doherty explicates this kind of spirituality in beautiful, eloquent form. A *poustinia* is a common and well known concept among Russian Christians. Essentially it is a hermitage where one follows the call to a solitary life that is consecrated totally to attendance upon God in ardent devotion and characterized by intercessory prayer for humankind.

In Christian tradition the desert came to symbolize a place of great danger, loneliness, cold, privation, hunger, and thirst. In the place of solitude the wilderness becomes an oven of spirituality. It is like a furnace where the fires of desert spirituality

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[18]Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (USA: Sheriar Press, 2010), 42-43. Based on Edward T. Hall's theory, "Proxemics", formulated in the 1960's exploring the relationship between building community and how humans utilize space.

purge and purify a soul for God. Doherty describes it as a trysting ground where a human soul wrestles and overcomes those areas prone to temptations, sin, and the demonic until the soul becomes a pure capacity for God.

In much the same way one can see how God used the wilderness experiences of my life to shape a piety that leans more toward disciplines which underlie the desert spirituality described above. The most encompassing of the spiritual disciplines that strike to the heart of an Eastern Orthodox desert spirituality are poverty, chastity, and obedience.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* the classic practices of poverty, chastity, and obedience in Christian tradition are known as the three great Evangelical Counsels and are considered "acts of supererogation."[19] This means the performance of these spiritual disciplines goes beyond what Christ required of those who wished to inherit eternal life. Rather than practices to be coerced, the three Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are freely chosen by those who wish to press on to moral and spiritual perfection.[20]

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* classifies the practices of poverty, chastity, and obedience as counsels rather than precepts.[21] Counsels are left to the "free choice to whom it is proposed"; precepts are "binding upon all."[22] This is because Christ's

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[19]Catholic Encyclopedia Online, "Evangelical Counsels", http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04435a.htm, (accessed Dec. 8, 2011).

[20]Based on Christ's conditional response to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21, " *If* you wish to be complete . . ."

[21]Catholic Encyclopedia Online, "Evangelical Counsels", http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04435a.htm (accessed Dec. 8, 2011).

[22]Ibid., paragraph two.

response to the rich young ruler was one of counsel rather than commandment. The young man's desire was to go beyond the standards Christ originally stipulated for salvation to ask for Christ's counsel as to what was necessary for moral perfection. Christ's response was to enjoin the young man to embrace a radical expression of poverty, acts of mercy for the poor, and complete consecration of one's life to Christ through obedience.

Whereas the Counsels to practice poverty and obedience can be found in Matthew 19:16, the idea of chastity is taken from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he suggests that there is room for a greater allegiance and service to God for those who remain unmarried. 1 Cor 7:32-35 Paul clarifies this idea further as an opinion rather than a command in verse twenty-five of that same chapter.

Teaching spiritual formation for four years at Lindsey Wilson College served further to intrigue my interest in the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith and in the three great Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Before ever thinking about pursuing a doctorate I had wondered how the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience might be revisited through the discipline of simplicity and given a fresh but historically faithful interpretation for Protestant Christians today.

The three great Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience point to so much more than their surface nomenclature and thus they leave room for a fresh interpretation for a twenty-first century Church which struggles with identity, relevance, and worldliness. Poverty may have more to do with right stewardship than the reality of ownership. Its chief characteristic is a freedom from desire.[23] Chastity has to do with a

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[23]Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 205.

love that is pure and unadulterated and free from any hint of self-gratification.[24] This kind of love is tangential in direction. It leans away from preoccupation with self and moves toward others. To love as Christ loved is to love unconditionally and without self-seeking or exploitation. Obedience orients the soul toward those things that form the basis for total consecration. One does not seek honors or power but instead seeks after God's kingdom and his righteousness. Mt 6:33

All three taken together fulfill Christ's Matthean 16:24 mandate for all who would become disciples. In studying the biblical and historical foundations for the Evangelical Counsels it soon became clear that the classic Christian discipline of simplicity was one of several expressions advocated by the Church in an attempt to be faithful to the spirit of the Counsels as interpreted through the various teachings of Jesus concerning spiritual perfection and discipleship.

Understanding the Counsels as interpreted through a lifestyle of simplicity naturally targets those temporal things that impede the progress of the soul in sanctification. Saint John exhorts early Christians not to love the world nor the things of the world. 1 Jn 2:15 For John the world or "*kosmos*" constitutes a broken system which is diametrically opposed to the saving acts and grace of God.[25] The world and its inhabitants are alienated and estranged from God and hostile toward him. *Kosmos* represents the totality of God's created order but the world order has fallen into alienation as a result of sin and its inhabitants are now hostile toward God.

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[24]Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled From The Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Pub., 1991), 43.

[25]G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, and G.W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 1:462-464.

Following his exhortation not to love the world or worldly things, Saint John then categorizes all temptation into three areas which involve the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. 1 Jn 2:16 The three Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience enhance the soul's certainty in becoming sanctified because a life of simplicity naturally targets John's three gateways to worldliness.

What kind of interpretation of the Counsels is called for in order to revitalize the twenty-first century Church? How does a radical caliber of discipleship witness to an affluent and materialistic society? The Church needs to recover her prophetic voice and once again become a strong moral force filled with authority and power to effect life, righteousness, and peace. The source of this voice is God and can be found in a life wholly given over to God for God's glory. This voice is not merely words but a message that has been divinely authorized.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The three great Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience were an attempt by the Church to respond faithfully to Christ's call for followers to live out a Matthean 16:24-25 discipleship comprised of self-denial, servanthood, and obedience. The reward for losing one's life in this manner was the promise of finding it. At the heart of this conditional following-after of Christ is the genus of true spiritual formation where the sinful self-life gradually is put to death and a new sanctified self begins to emerge which moral character is configured to Christ.

Of increasing emphasis in the doctoral candidate's research has been the focus on simplicity and its potential to witness to a postmodern, affluent and materialistic society. Although all genuine renewal is a product of the Holy Spirit's power, responsive obedience to God's grace lived out in voluntary simplicity carries a moral and spiritual authority necessary to effect genuine transformation.

To understand this promise of freedom to which Christ was calling us we first must understand the aspect of descent in exaltation theology and then look at the kenotic value of voluntary poverty that informed Christ's actions in descent. This chapter will attempt to explore the value of voluntary poverty in Christ's *kenosis* and in his descent into hell and offer some implications such poverty may have with regard to transformation. The spiritual grace of voluntary poverty needful for entrance into the

kingdom of heaven was modeled by Jesus Christ through both his incarnation and through his descent into hell and carries implications with regard to spiritual and moral authority in matters related to salvation, discipleship, and mission. The themes of humility, love, sacrifice, servanthood, and obedience as displayed by Jesus Christ through his actions in descent are central to Christian spiritual formation and discipleship.

Kenosis

The *kenosis* and the aspect of descent in Christ's exaltation lay the moral foundation for Christ's call to a radical expression of love through self-renunciation, self-giving, and consecrated obedience. Calvin commented that in citing the *kenosis* or self-emptying of Christ in Philippians 2:5-8, Paul was commending the *kenosis* as a rule or pattern of behavior for all human beings to follow.[1] *Word Biblical Commentary* says it presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action.[2] The self-humbling of God in descent from heaven to earth and then from life to death therefore becomes the model to which Jesus is calling all who wish to be his disciples.

In the early hymn known as the *kenosis* in Philippians 2:6-11, the *agape* of Christ is celebrated in his movement downward where he exchanged the perfect beatitude he shared with the Godhead to become human. *Agape* becomes the moral basis for Paul's plea to the Philippians, "complete my joy by being of the same mind, *having the same love*." The love which Paul enjoins in this passage is unselfish, humble, and preferential.

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[1]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 54.

[2]Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43 of *Word Biblical Commentary,* David A. Hubbard, John D. W. Watts and Ralph P. Martin, ed. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 79.

It is characterized by descent. It puts the good of others as a higher priority over selfish ambition.

In the *kenosis* or "emptying", the *New International Commentary* says Christ impoverished himself of the glory he shared with God in order to assume the humility and attitude of a servant.[3] This emptying was a divestiture of reputation and rights rather than of divinity or authority. The self-emptying could not have been one of divinity because Christ did acts of power while on earth and the demons recognized his divine identity as the Son of God. Mt 8:29 Nor could the emptying have been one of authority because the gospels testify Christ taught as one having authority as well as having authority to both lay down and to take up his life and to execute eternal judgment. Mk 1:27, Jn 10:18, 5:27 Rather, commentators generally agree the emptying was one of status. Christ demonstrated the descent or humbling intrinsic to *agape* love in his movement downward when he voluntarily exchanged what was his by right, the glory he had with the Father, for the lowly status of a servant.

Just as Christ willingly chose to give up the glory he shared with the Father by exchanging the form he had with God for the form of a servant, so the practice of the Evangelical Counsels was the Church's attempt to share in Christ's identification with the poor, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." 2 Cor 8:9 Voluntary poverty is itself a form of descent in that it seeks to emulate Christ's actions in the *kenosis* by assuming the ignoble status of the poor.

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[3]Jac J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon,* vol. 8 of *The New International Commentary*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), 81-82.

Examining Voluntary Poverty as a Spiritual Grace

The Greek word for "poor " used in Matthew 5:3 is the word "*ptochos*" and it refers to a person who is completely and utterly destitute. In the sense in which Jesus uses it in Matthew 5:3 it refers to a person who recognizes her complete and utter spiritual bankruptcy and the grace to turn outward, therefore, in reliance upon God.[4] The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states, "The main Hebrew term has the primary sense of *dependence*, with the more developed implications of lowliness, dispossession, poverty, and, in the religious world, humility or piety."[5] To be poor in spirit, therefore, can mean one has come to recognize one's complete and utter sinful estate and thus one's need for God. Out of this awareness of one's need there is a deliberate act of turning to God for aid.[6]

Taking it one step further, the *New Testament Greek Commentary* says that to be poor in spirit can be understood to point to "an element of decision or choice in the embracing of poverty."[7] The spiritual grace of voluntary poverty then takes on the added dimension of decision. With this in mind it is possible to think of being poor in spirit as an ongoing work of sanctification through responsive obedience upon the part of the believer. As a believer matures under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit the believer is confronted throughout life with choices that involve a deliberate exercise of humility

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[4]William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 90-91.

[5]G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, and G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 969.

[6]J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, vol. 1 of *The New Testament Greek Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 200-201.

[7]Ibid., 198–201.

where one chooses to displace the self-life in order to seek the greater good of another. Like Christ in his *kenosis*, the spiritual grace of voluntary poverty itself becomes a pathway of descent each time a disciple of Christ's repeatedly chooses to displace selfish interests for the good of another.

To summarize, spiritual poverty is first a work of grace within the soul. Jesus affirmed this grace as a state of blessedness because it conditions a person for redemption. As suggested above it also conditions a person for sanctification and spiritual maturity. A person first must come to recognize her spiritual impoverishment and therefore her need for God, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Rom 3:23 There is a consensus that this is the beginning and necessary first step for salvation, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Mt 5:3 Voluntary poverty also might be thought of as a continuing work of sanctification in the life of the soul where Christ, the very image of humility and self-emptying, is wrought.

Examining Voluntary Poverty as a Lifestyle

As an underlying belief or value the grace of voluntary poverty should inform behavior. Paul looked to Jesus and held him up as an example for the Corinthians to follow when he appealed to voluntary poverty as a value Christ modeled by becoming poor so that they might become rich. 2 Cor 8:9 Christ impoverished himself for our good. The idea Paul is trying to communicate is that we likewise should exhibit a willingness to make the sacrifices necessary in order to secure another's good. One chooses to simplify or do with less if we have the means to help others live well.

In studying the idea of voluntary poverty in scripture it was found that Christ commended it as a spiritual grace needful for entrance into the kingdom and also lived it as a lifestyle. Mt 5:3, Phil 2:7 However, it is important to establish the caveat that Christ's lifestyle of voluntary poverty was not the complete and utter destitution associated with forced poverty. There is a significant difference between the freely chosen expression of simplicity and the ignominy of forced destitution.

R.E. Nixon of the *New Bible Dictionary* believes there is no reason to assume Christ lived in abject poverty.[8] As the eldest son of Joseph and Mary he most likely would have received some kind of inheritance and the scriptures indicate he was accustomed to paying the Temple tax. Mt 17:24-27 He also enjoyed the hospitality and benefaction of the wealthy. Lk 8:3, 19:5 Even though some of his disciples came from well to do families they chose to share a common purse and found opportunities to make contributions toward the relief of the poor. Jn 13:29

In the gospels Jesus spoke more on the subject of money than he did on any subject other than the kingdom of God.[9] He warned that with wealth came underlying temptations which could hinder salvation and sanctification. Mt 19:24, Lk 12:15 He censured money and commanded it become subservient to caring for the poor and growing the kingdom of God. Lk 12:33, 16:9 Jesus did not condemn wealth, but he put it in its proper perspective with relation to discipleship, "You cannot serve God and mammon" Lk 16:13 KJV The abundant life Jesus came to bring was not dependent on

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[8]R. E. Nixon, "Poverty In The New Testament," D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer and D. J. Wiseman, ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 945.

[9]Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex, and Power* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 19.

wealth. Rather, Jesus advocated a lifestyle of faith that exercised trust in God's ability to provide the necessities of life. Mt 5:33

In his book, *The Politics of Jesus*, John Howard Yoder advances an apologetic for Christian pacifism based upon the social ethics and teachings of Jesus and the witness of the New Testament writers and apostolic tradition. Yoder, a Mennonite theologian, believed that the prophetic understanding of Jubilee served as the basis for Jesus' social ethics, practice, and teaching, "The kingdom of God is a social order and not a hidden one . . . it is a concrete jubilary obedience, in pardon and repentance."[10] Jesus' teachings were to be realized in actual ways that practiced debt forgiveness and the return of property. The practice of Jubilee as incarnated through Jesus was to be, " a visible socio-political, economic restructuring of relations among the people of God."[11]

Yoder advocates an active kind of Christian passivity more so than an inactive one which moral strength is found through an embodiment of conscience. This witness of presence is one that points to another social order other than that practiced by the world and as a lifestyle lived in simplicity it confronts the principalities and powers. Simplicity loves indiscriminately as God loves and forgives and serves others just as did Christ. At the heart of Yoder's thesis is the kenotic value of renunciation which Jesus evidenced through his descent. Jesus' value of voluntary poverty was evidenced through his willingness to abandon the prerogatives of the divine nature.

Yet according to Yoder any attempt to call the Church universal to imitate the physical aspects of Christ's life in voluntary poverty must be acknowledged to be outside

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[10]John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 108.

[11]Ibid., 39.

of the parameters of the New Testament witness. Yoder says the only imitation supported by the New Testament witness is one that is moral in nature where Jesus' values in voluntary renunciation are exercised with respect to worldly systems of power and authority:

> There is thus one realm in which the concept of imitation holds – but there it holds in every strand of the NT literature and all the more strikingly by virtue of the absence of parallels in other realms: this is at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in relation to enmity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus – and only thus – are we bound by the NT thought to 'be like Jesus.'[12]

Yoder is saying the practice of simplicity becomes a matter of moral conscience in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty.

To summarize, Christ used the language of abject poverty to convey the need for humility. Christ commended spiritual poverty as a beatitude because it conditioned a person for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Spiritual poverty is a work of grace where one comes to recognize one's complete and utter spiritual destitution and helplessness before God and thus one's need for God's saving action. Mt 5:3, Ex 14:14 Although Christ lived a life of voluntary poverty his claim upon disciples was that they should embrace simplicity. We emulate Christ's kenotic value of voluntary poverty when we choose to live responsibly in light of known human and environmental need.

Trinity

The Christian understanding of God as Trinity should serve as the basis for all human relationships. Roman Catholic theologian Leonardo Boff says, "The community

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[12]Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 134.

of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit becomes the prototype of the human community dreamed of by those who wish to improve society and build it in such a way as to make it into the image and likeness of the Trinity."[13]

This sentiment is similarly echoed by Catholic theologian Catherine Mowry LaCugna. LaCugna claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity should serve as the model for all human relationships and especially for Christian life and the mission of the Church.[14] She argued that out of all the doctrines the Trinity was the most practical because it helped the Church define the parameters of the gospel and its claim in discipleship upon humankind as well as guide the Church's worship, work, and witness.

Therefore, in light of looking to the Trinity as the chief ethic for Christian discipleship and mission the follower of Jesus Christ is called to be perfect as one's heavenly Father is perfect, "Therefore, you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Mt 5:48 This perfection is a perfection of *agape* love, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 Jn 4:7-8 The context of Matthew 5:38-48 concerns the nature and extent of *agape* love. In this context Jesus particularizes love in practical ways such as turning the other cheek, giving up one's cloak, going the extra mile, and praying for one's enemies. To love in this way is to be like God. To be perfect, Greek "*telios*" for "mature" or "complete", is a moral perfection of character which chief characteristic is *agape* love.

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[13]Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 119.

[14]Ibid., 149.

The second mile impressment in Matthew 5:41 epitomizes the moral perfection of love to which disciples are to aspire. The people of Palestine had been subject to impressment since Persian times where they could be made to render time away from normal animal husbandry in order to shoulder and help transport baggage in service to the authorities. Jesus' admonition is to be ungrudging and generous. The first mile can be done in the flesh but the second requires the power of the Spirit. Going the second mile evidences the moral perfection of character that is empty of the prideful self-life and its respective interests. Rather, one is focused on the greater good of the other and this other-ness epitomizes the presence of *agape* in the soul.

To go the second mile is to exercise control within the parameters of untenable circumstances and thus be enabled to triumph over evil. Contexts for redemption and reconciliation to God become available:

> This is not necessarily an endorsement of the practice of impressment as such, but in a situation in which changing the rules was not a possibility, the proposed response would have the capacity of turning the nature of the transaction from one in which both parties felt worse about each other after the encounter to one in which positive human interaction might become possible.[15]

In loving our enemies we evidence that we are indeed the children of our Father in heaven. Mt 5:44-45

Agape love becomes the defining virtue for interpersonal relationships and for structuring society. In the context of Matthew 5:38-48 it is a love which puts aside or empties one's self interests or rights for the sake of another. In this way it can be said *agape* love reflects the spiritual beatitude of voluntary poverty. *Agape* love seeks the

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[15]J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, vol. 1 of *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 259-260.

highest good of another and this is often at the expense of one's own self-interests. To be perfect as the Father is perfect is to be willing to displace the self and its interests for the good of another. Richard of St. Victor, a theologian from the twelfth century, argued that God's love had to be completely devoid of self-love if it was to be perfect.[16] The love of God as lived through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a perfect love that is totally unselfish.

As the chief virtue basic to the nature of God and as the foremost virtue of the Christian life, perfect love also cannot be fully realized apart from self-giving or sacrifice, "For God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Jn 3:16 These two characteristics, unselfishness and sacrifice, are central to the perfect love as modeled by God in the descent of Christ in the Incarnation (*kenosis*) and in his descent into hell on our behalf. This action of voluntary poverty upon the part of God as expressed in descent helps form the moral basis for a disciple's call to obedience in conformity with Christ's own self-denial and taking up the cross. Mt 16:24

Jesus' Burial and Descent into Hell

The descent of Jesus Christ is understood by the Church to be separated into two distinct stages. The first stage is his descent from heaven to earth through the Incarnation,

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[16]Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God,* p. 11. "Richard's main line of reasoning begins with the idea of supreme goodness, which, he argued, must involve love. Because self-love cannot be true love, supreme love requires another, equal to the lover, who is the recipient of that love. Furthermore, because supreme love is received as well as given, it must be a shared love, in which each person loves and is loved by the other. Finally, because supreme love must desire that the love it experiences through giving and receiving be one that is shared with another, it is not merely mutual love between two but is a love that is fully present among three and only three."

and the second stage is his descent from earth to hell after his death and burial. The idea in descent involves movement downward. The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines it as "a downward slope, path, or track" or "a moral, social, or psychological decline into a specified undesirable state."[17] With this idea in mind the theme of descent becomes an apt description characterizing the life of Christ in his movement downward from heaven to earth and from earth to hell.

Christus descendit ad inferos . . . "He descended into hell." It is not the purpose of this chapter to present an in-depth study on this mystery of faith except to admit that it is often overlooked even though it has strong evidence to support its presence as an article of faith. A robust tradition also supports the idea that the descent of Christ into hell must be understood as implied in the creedal affirmations referenced in Christ's resurrection and burial.

Traditionally Christ's descent is viewed as the immediate manifestation of his triumph on the cross and the firstfruits of redemption. Certain theological disparities related to descent include whether or not Christ's atoning work was completed on the cross and his descent seen as an act of triumph or whether or not Christ had to suffer in hell first and do battle there to free imprisoned souls. Questions also exist among scholars as to the nature of hell and the specific realms Christ visited during the time his soul was separated from his body.

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[17]"descent", New Oxford American Dictionary, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, USA).

The confession of Jesus' death in the Catholic liturgy of Holy Saturday implies the following:[18]

1. That Jesus was fully human.
2. He descended to be with those who had died before him.
3. That no passageway to freedom existed before Christ made one.
4. The fact that Christ was perfectly just means that his descent into hell was motivated out of charity.
5. The whole order of creation was re-established by the New Adam who liberates creation from slavery to Satan in order to celebrate eternal Sabbath.

Old Testament Typology - Exodus 14:13-14

Israel's exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea are parts of a larger salvific story central to the formulation of Israel as a nation and her identity as a people uniquely redeemed by God for cosmic eschatological purposes. These two verses were chosen as a subject for study for several reasons. As part of the larger pericope consisting of the entire chapter of Exodus fourteen, it is well documented that this event was believed by the Church to prefigure Christ's descent into hell into which believers share through baptism.[19] This passage also mirrors themes shared in the writer's spiritual autobiography related to God's sovereignty with regard to redemption and deliverance from evil. The writer also personally identifies with the utter bankruptcy of spirit which is

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[18]Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 42-43.

[19]Ibid., 41. "Given the typological connection between Christ's baptism and the Descent, and hence between sacramental baptism and the Descent, many Old Testament types of baptism can conversely shed light on the Descent. For example, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea dry-shod, fleeing Pharaoh and following Moses, himself a type of Christ."

forged through a spirituality of the desert and which perfects a soul through continued reliance upon God.

The book of Exodus as a whole can be categorized as a spiritual journey of the people called Israel: from slavery (chapters 1-6) to salvation (chapters 7-18) to sanctification (chapters 19-40).[20] It can also be viewed with a focus upon the revelation of God's glory where God first reveals himself to a *person* (Moses), to a *pharaoh*, and then to a *people* (through the tabernacle).

Chapter fourteen describes the complete destruction of Pharaoh and his army as Moses leads Israel through the divided waters of the Red Sea. Central to this divine display of power is the stated purpose of God to deliberately entrap Israel so that there remains no means of escape by human agency, "Tell the sons to turn back and camp . . . by the sea. For Pharaoh will say. . . 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.'" Ex 14:2-3 Seeing the pursuing army of Pharaoh and realizing their predicament, Israel turns to Moses in distress:

> v 13 But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.
> v 14 The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.

Three words are of note in these verses. First, the verb "stand by" in verse thirteen implies a sense of commanding the resolve necessary to remain firm and not to give in to panic.[21] Secondly, the word for "salvation" in verse thirteen is the word "*yesuha*", which is also the Hebrew name for "Jesus." Essential to this Hebrew word for salvation is the

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[20]Walk Thru The Bible Ministries, Inc. (Atlanta, GA: NavPress,1992), January issue.

[21]J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

sense that deliverance comes from outside the person who is oppressed.[22] Third, the verb for "keep silent" is the Hebrew "*hares*." It means to make no objection but to remain as if deaf or mute.[23] It carries the sense of not taking action and of making no moves.[24] The *New International Version* translates this clause as, "you need only to be still."

The nation of Israel has only to cease their fearful turmoil and wait expectantly once again for a mighty demonstration of God's power. Caught in a trap where they find themselves without any recourse, the Israelites must look for deliverance from outside of themselves and separate and apart from their own resources. In effect, they are in a situation of utter bankruptcy with respect to any reliance upon themselves. Their only option apart from panic is to exercise faith. They must trust in God and wait for his salvation. God is the champion who will fight on the Israelites' behalf to overthrow their enemies so completely that they will never see their enemies again forever.

According to Catholic theologian and scholar, Alyssa L. Pitstick, to limit to only New Testament texts one's study of the theme of Christ's descent into hell is to severely truncate one's field of research.[25] Pitstick says that with respect to salvation history God often uses a divine pedagogy to help persons understand his actions in redemption. One of these pedagogies is typology. In typology certain persons, things, or events "prefigure

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[22]R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 414.

[23]W. L. Holladay and L. Kohler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 118.

[24]J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

[25] Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 59.

or typify the life of Christ."[26] For example, the story of Passover in Exodus twelve prefigures Christ who is the Paschal Lamb. Moses is considered to be a type of Christ who leads his people to freedom away from bondage under Pharaoh.[27] Pitstick cites the sea as, "itself a Scriptural image of death and the realm of demonic powers."[28]

With this background in mind one can begin to see the powerful prefiguring of Christ's work in descent through the Old Testament story of the crossing of the Red Sea. First of all there is a strong presence of spiritual poverty. The Israelites have come to recognize their complete and utter destitution with regard to any resources they may possess to save themselves. Their only recourse is to turn outward to God and rely on God for his salvation. The fact that Moses, himself a type of Christ, calls to the children of Israel to look for their "salvation" or "*yeshua*" points to the future *Yeshua* who accomplishes redemption in much the same fashion. Just as the Egyptian army was completely overthrown by the Red Sea, so too does the Church affirm Christ's overthrow of Satan and his demons. Jn 12:31, Heb 2:14-15, 1 Jn 3:8

Moses leads the children of Israel safely through the midst of the Red Sea after having created a path to freedom that previously had not existed. In much the same way, Christ's redeeming work through his death and burial means that Christians are no longer subject to the power of sin or the imprisonment of death. Salvation through Jesus Christ has become the path to freedom and a future hope of eternal life.

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[26]Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 34.

[27]G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, and G. W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

[28]Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 36. Endnote: "With respect to water as the realm of death and the devil, see Per Lundberg, *La typologie baptismale dans l'ancienne Eglise*, Acta Seminarii Neotestamenttici Upsaliensis 10 (Leipzig: Alfred Lorentz, 1942), 64-72."

The crossing through the Red Sea by the children of Israel can also be seen as a prefiguring of Christian baptism by which believers share in the death and burial of Jesus Christ. Rom 6:3-4 Pitstick says that the purpose of the sacraments is "to configure the Church to her Head."[29] Through the sacrament of baptism believers share in the redemptive work Jesus accomplished through his death and burial.

Implications for a Discipleship of Descent

It has been the aim of this chapter to explore the value of voluntary poverty as it mirrors Christ's work in descent from heaven to earth and then from earth to the grave. Voluntary poverty is itself a form of descent because a person who chooses to follow Christ seeks consistently to exercise God's love for the redemption of others. Self-denial and sacrifice are marks of redemptive love, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Jn 15:13 To love in this way is to walk in obedience to Christ, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Jn 15:12

The beatitude of voluntary poverty is an ongoing work of sanctification wherein a disciple of Christ chooses to deny oneself and take up the cross in order to follow God. In the displacing of one's life for the good of others one gains her life back again. Mt 16:25 A caliber of discipleship which embraces descent as a lifestyle has the moral authority to speak powerfully to the anti-Christ systems of a world characterized by pride, wealth, and power.

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[29]Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 42.

A discipleship of descent also forms the moral grounds for the Church's mission. In a lecture on mission in 1928, Karl Barth connected the mission of the Church with the doctrine of the Trinity.[30] This Trinitarian understanding of perfect love provides the moral basis for the Church's mission. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Mt 28:19 The idea of mission is grounded in an intratrinitarian movement of God himself wherein the Father is understood to have sent the Son, and the Father and Son are understood to have sent the Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit then send the Church.[31]

The whole Bible is a sending document. Jesus is first sent by God to inaugurate God's kingdom bringing with it God's blessings and enjoining responsive obedience. Jesus' followers continue his mission by proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior and calling people to faith.[32] Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to emulate his actions in descent through self-emptying (*kenosis* and self-denial), self-giving (servanthood and sacrifice), and total consecration (obedience). "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Mt 16:24, Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23

Spiritual poverty as exercised through a discipleship characterized by descent holds the potential to revitalize the Church. A fundamental axiom related to the God of the Bible is that God excels in bringing life out of death. "Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those

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[30]Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

[31]Ibid., 62-63.

[32]Ibid., 50.

who hear will live." Jn 5:25 God has power to bring forth life no matter the nature of attendant circumstances. Transformation is the work of redemption and its source is centered in God's attribute of unfailing love.

So often the human story has been marked by decay and decline. From a biblical perspective, this has been true from the very beginning not only with regard to sin and the human condition but also with regard to the vitality of the Church. Throughout its history the Church has been characterized by "a pulsation of 'special seasons,' interspersed with exhaustion and backsliding."[33] Currently the Church of the twenty-first century is in a state of decline due to steep philosophical and sociocultural shifts, but God has a way of using crisis to precipitate renewal. As the study of Exodus fourteen above attempted to show, the recognition of one's utter spiritual bankruptcy is the beginning of one's turning outward to God for his saving action. The precipice of crisis has the potential to birth the prayer necessary for God to act redemptively.

According to Howard A. Snyder, Ph.D. in historical theology from the University of Notre Dame, history shows that renewal in the life and mission of the Church is often precipitated by crisis. Decay and death become the liminal place out of which the Church is forced to reexamine her ecclesiology with respect to her core task in the world. This is very similar to the spiritual grace of voluntary poverty. The recognition of one's total spiritual bankruptcy becomes the liminal place out of which prayer to God is birthed.

Similarly in his *Reflections on Revival*, Charles Finney wrote that the church has "so little firmness and stability of purpose that unless it is greatly excited, it will go back

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[33]Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 44.

to the path of duty, and do nothing to promote the glory of God."[34] However, because of God's loving actions in redemption, times of crises and decline can become the transformative seedbeds out of which new movements arise to revitalize the Church.

Rediscovering the work of voluntary poverty in spiritual formation has potential to reignite a more vibrant spirituality during a time of crisis in the Church. The Church in the West is in decline as regards membership and attendance. It is affluent and worldly. The call of Christ to embrace simplicity in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty holds the potential to radically witness to a society that struggles with pride, money, and power. Reissuing a call to a discipleship characterized by descent holds the potential to ignite a movement which moral authority is enhanced through a more radical living out of Christ's counsels for moral and spiritual perfection. The call to simplicity is the call to follow Christ in his self-emptying. The overall aim is to make Christ known.

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[34]Charles G. Finney, *Reflections on Revival*, comp. Donald W. Dayton (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1979).

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The classic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were an attempt by the Church to faithfully live out Christ's call to discipleship. Historically the Church taught that these three vows were to be volitional. They were meant to be undertaken in manner and extent only to the degree allowable by conscience. However, tension has existed within the Church regarding Christ's response to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16 which enjoined voluntary poverty and obedience as acts of supererogation and Christ's call for *all* disciples to embrace self-denial and renunciation, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mt 16:24 "So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Lk 14:33 The nature and extent of Christ's call to renunciation has been a continuing tension in Christian spirituality.

This chapter will explore the differing ways the Church has sought to interpret and faithfully live out what St. Francis called the "marrow of the gospel" or Christ's call to voluntary simplicity. It is the thesis of this chapter that the voluntary poverty modeled by Christ in his incarnation and descent into hell directly informs the caliber of discipleship to which Christ calls all who would follow after him, and it imbues Christ's followers with moral and spiritual authority to carry out his mission in the world.

Evangelical Poverty

The language of evangelical poverty as used by the Church refers to a voluntarily chosen expression of deprived economic status for the sake of piety, and it signifies a moral disposition characterized by an inner detachment from possessions.[1] In Christian history asceticism, monasticism, and simplicity have been attempts to live out differing expressions of voluntary poverty.

For most of its history the Church has tied evangelical poverty to discipleship. In the first few centuries following Christ the Church struggled to define the extent to which the Christian way of life was to be separate from that practiced by the world. How was the new salvific way revealed by Jesus to be reconciled with the praxis of everyday human existence in the midst a world dominated by unrighteous mammon? The rise of asceticism and monasticism testify that the early church considered the demands of Christian discipleship to be incompatible with the world.

Before the community at Qumran Judaism had no comprehensive ethic to guide ownership of property. The overarching witness of the Old Testament concerning wealth was that prosperity was to be enjoyed as long as it did not promote prideful self-sufficiency so as to turn away a soul from reliance upon God. Deut 8:11-17 Rather, an abundance of material blessings was to be celebrated while at the same time freely shared with those less fortunate and in need. Chapter fifteen of Deuteronomy makes it clear that God intended the Israelites to concern themselves with the needs of the poor and not to harden their hearts against them. Those who had means were to give freely because they

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[1]J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 198-201.

had been blessed by God. The Old Testament gives insight to respect the ownership of one's private possessions by not coveting or stealing, to work hard and to enjoy the fruits of one's labors, and to understand that all one possessed was a gracious blessing from God to be stewarded with a generous hand. Ex 20:15, Eccl 3:13, Gen 1:26-28, Lev 23:22

The idea of voluntary poverty in order to obtain spiritual enlightenment or favor with God cannot be found in the Old Testament scriptures. Within the canon of Scripture the idea of voluntary poverty as a path to spiritual perfection was first introduced and affirmed by Jesus. Mt 19:21, 29; 5:3; 16:24 This same concern for the poor continued on into the first centuries of the Church, "Christianity inherited the great Jewish tradition that God cares especially for the poor and judges a community by its attention to their needs."[2] "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" 1 Jn 3:17 The shared ownership and distribution of goods and land were practiced by the Jerusalem church both in anticipation of the *parousia* as well as in response to Jesus' teachings and a traditional Jewish concern not to neglect the poor. R. E. Nixon points out that the extreme interpretation of voluntary poverty which the early church at Jerusalem practiced through their initial rejection of private ownership of property later fed into the Jerusalem church's collapse, so much so that Paul was moved by necessity to seek financial contributions for their support.[3]

Whether or not this approach to shared ownership was to set an example for all later generations of Christian believers has been a subject of debate. As years lapsed with

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[2]E. Fahlbusch and G. W. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999-2003), 622.

[3]Nixon, "Poverty In the New Testament", 945.

no appearance of Christ, the Church came to theologize that the actions at Jerusalem were historically specific to the anticipation of what the early Church hoped would be Christ's second coming. However, the daily distribution of bread and concern for the poor within the Christian community at Jerusalem became a guiding principle for the Church's continuing practice of charitable hospitality.[4]

Up until the second and third centuries the Church associated self-denial with the repentance required for salvation and abstinence from sin.[5] In a second century treatise by Clement of Alexandria, Clement emphasizes the right use of wealth and makes the point that Christ did not forbid the ownership of private property but rather an inordinate love of it.[6] Wealth, Clement says, is a means for doing good and the unequal distribution of property presents opportunities for Christians to exercise charity.[7] Augustine understood self-denial as a renunciation of the worldly systems of pride, power, vainglory, vanity, and sin.[8] It was not until the rise of asceticism in the fourth century that the practice of voluntary poverty began to be promoted as the religious ideal that more perfectly fulfilled Christ's call to discipleship. The Church had come to view the ascetics as "a special class of Christians" who were given preference and deferred to as "the fairest ornaments of the

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[4]Nixon, "Poverty In the New Testament", 622.

[5]Origin, "Self-Denial and Cross-Bearing", Book XII, Sections 24 and 25, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101612.htm (accessed April 18, 2012).

[6]P. Schaff and D. S. Schaff, "Voluntary Poverty", *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

[7]Clement of Alexandria, "Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?", http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0207.htm (accessed April 18, 2012).

[8]Gerald W. Schlabach, *For the Joy Set Before Us: Augustine and Self-Denying Love* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

church."[9] Part of the work of the Reformation was to challenge the undue regard the Church had come to place upon the Evangelical Counsels as "virtues of a higher grade than obedience to the explicit commands of Christ."[10] The Reformation helped return the practice of simplicity as a more balanced interpretation of Christ's mandate for genuine discipleship.

Asceticism and Monasticism

In the second and third centuries evangelical poverty was practiced by early Christian ascetics as a way to seek perfection by entering into Christ's sufferings. Asceticism became the "unbloody martyrdom" as the Church sought the purification of the wilderness in place of waning persecution and growing acceptance of Christianity. Asceticism is a term used to describe practices involving bodily deprivation and self-mortification for the purpose of obtaining spiritual benefits.[11] Asceticism most commonly includes practices such as going without sleep (vigils), food (fasting), sex (celibacy), companionship (solitude), movement (confinement), and comfort (fine clothing and cleanliness). Asceticism seeks to suppress the desires and drives of the body in order to liberate the spirit.

The primary aim of ascetic practice in the development of both Western and Eastern Christian spirituality was to help believers remove those obstacles which were

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[9]P. Schaff, and D. S. Schaff, "Ascetic Tendencies: Ascetic Virtue and Piety", IX.104, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

[10]C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 3 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 271.

[11]Samuel Rubenson, "Asceticism: Christian Perspectives", *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, 2 vols., William M. Johnston, ed. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 92.

perceived as entrances to sin and temptation in order to aid sanctification and achieve spiritual enlightenment. The medieval Church struggled with the tension between the body being created in God's image and therefore to be celebrated and enjoyed versus Gnostic influences which led to the view of the body as being the seat of sinful passions and therefore something to be disciplined and suppressed. This eventually led to a bifurcation in the development of Christian spirituality between East and West, with the East taking a more literal rendering of the gospel call to renunciation and the practice of extreme forms of bodily deprivation. The West came to emphasize voluntary poverty in terms of the discipline of simplicity with its emphasis more on an inward detachment regarding possessions. Throughout the Middle Ages the Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience were observed with varying degrees of strictness, "Poverty may take the form of sharing goods, of hospitality, or of a simple lifestyle with generous giving to the community." [12]

In the late Middle Ages evangelical poverty experienced a renewal as it became an instrument for reform. The founding of the Mendicant orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Cistercians were attempts to purify the Church and regain the moral authority necessary to minister effectively to a rising merchant middle class.

Asceticism and Moral Authority

In studying the development of the Eastern and Western streams of Christian spirituality, a general consensus was found among the two traditions which affirms

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[12]E. Fahlbusch and G. W. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999-2003), 622.

asceticism as a faithful expression of discipleship which was modeled by Christ. The spiritual grace of poverty is first a beatitude which gains one entrance into the kingdom of God in that it acknowledges the spiritual bankruptcy of the human soul and one's need of a Savior. Second, it is a quality of Christian character forged by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and represents the guiding ethic of *agape* love in the Church's servant expressions of mission and acts of mercy. Third, as both an outward lifestyle expressive of an inward reality, voluntary poverty forms the basis for a moral and spiritual authority that is effective in the ministry of reconciliation to which all disciples are called.[13]

Of particular interest in this chapter is the idea that asceticism was believed by both Jews and Christians to help a person achieve greater status in terms of both spiritual authority with God and moral authority among men. Richard Fosters says, "We deceive ourselves if we believe we can possess the inward reality (of simplicity) without it having a profound effect on how we live."[14]

In an interesting article in the *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, Alexander Golitzin traces the origins of asceticism to Jewish apocalyptic literature from the intertestamental period.[15] Ascetic practice did not play a prominent role in the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament outside of a temporary celibacy imposed by holy war or in preparation for service in the Temple. The Old Testament also mentions fasting, tears, prayers, and the

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[13]Phraseology is borrowed from Richard J. Foster, "The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle." Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 79.

[14]Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 79.

[15]Alexander Golitzin, "Spirituality: Eastern Christian", *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, 2 vols., William M. Johnston, ed. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 1185-1191.

wearing of sackcloth as expressions of repentance or in preparation for encountering God.

According to Golitzin an emphasis on ascetic practice as a basis for spiritual authority arises from Jewish apocalyptic literature such as can be found in I Enoch. The mystical experiences described in that genre of literature all follow a common pattern in which preparatory ascetic practice is followed by an ascent into heaven and an encounter with the divine. Initiation into the mysteries of heaven accord the ascetic practitioner with angelic status as a co-worshipper in the heavenly courts. The ascetic receives a vision of the divine glory and returns to earth with a unique status and spiritual authority or message concerning the things of God.

This kind of apocalyptic genre sowed the seeds for Christian spirituality in understanding that human beings can themselves become bearers of the divine glory. After the Temple was destroyed the Jews came to believe that the Shekinah of God could be found in the sacred writings of the Torah, in the common worship of the synagogue, and in the person of the rabbi himself. Jesus was all three. He was the Word made flesh, the Temple that could not be destroyed, and the "accredited master (rabbi) who instructed others by personal example, teaching, and oversight."[16] Jn 1:14, 2:19 After Pentecost, the Shekinah of God came to indwell all believers. Col 1:27 In essence Golitzin is affirming the Biblical witness that an encounter with God confers the very real status and authority of a prophet, "And I have put My words in your mouth, and have covered you with the

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[16]Avery Dulles, "Discipleship", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 4, Mircea Elizde, ed. (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 351.

shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'" Is 51:16

Implications for Revitalization

History shows that the embrace of voluntary poverty in the pursuit of the gospel life, whether through asceticism, monasticism, or simplicity, carries weight with the culture to which it witnesses. It carries implications with regard to salvation, discipleship, and mission. The foremost implication is one of moral and spiritual authority to effect transformation. These statements must be understood within a context of *agape* love. *Agape* love is central to a theology of descent. Human endeavor devoid of the Spirit of God cannot effect transformation, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." 1 Cor 13:3

It is part of the thesis of this dissertation that the voluntary poverty modeled by Christ in his incarnation and descent into hell forms the moral basis for Christ's call to self-denial, servanthood, and obedience, and it imbues Christ's followers with moral and spiritual authority to carry out his mission in the world.

Revival in society is not merely the result of sociological forces. Revival is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit. Christians acknowledge that sociological change for good can occur because God's common grace is upon men and women to bring about goodness. However, what humankind considers to be good does not necessarily mean such goodness is godly or accords with God's revealed righteousness. Missiologist Viv Grigg says that revival is not necessary in order for social change to result. However, it is necessary if it is to be a positive factor in steering social change toward the righteousness

that accords with God's revealed ways, "Revival is the positive factor to move social change to righteousness."[17]

Foremost in Grigg's understanding of revival is that revival originates with and through the person of the Holy Spirit who was sent to empower the Church to bring Christ's ministry of reconciliation to fullness on earth.[18] Grigg defines revival as, "the experiences of the Holy Spirit falling on groups resulting in a dramatic transformation of their Christianity either caused by or resulting in repentance, accompanied by boldness in evangelism, power, love, and unity."[19]

An encounter with the Holy Spirit is primary to renewal and the Church's work of mission and ministry, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Acts 10:38 In his book, *Minding the Good Ground,* Jason Vickers states that the, "ultimate resource of Church renewal is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our midst," and, "The Church is a charismatic community that is entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit for all she is and for all she has."[20]

In revival the kingdom of God should materialize in such a way that society is impacted for righteousness on every level. Revival is ultimately pragmatic because God purposes life to be abundant for all people groups. Jn 10:10, Col 3:8-15, Eph 4:13 The

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[17]Viv Grigg, *The Spirit of Christ and the Postmodern City: Transforming Revival Among Auckland's Evangelicals and Pentecostals* (Emmeth Press, 2009), 181.

[18]Grigg, *The Spirit of Christ and the Postmodern City,* 186.

[19]Ibid., 11.

[20]Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 42, 45.

nature and extent to which the Church embraces self-renunciation in response to Christ's call to discipleship directly informs the weight of its Christian witness in society:

> "Certainly not everyone is called to a bloody martyrdom. There is also an unbloody 'martyrdom,' which is no less significant. ... It is the silent and heroic testimony of many Christians who live the Gospel without compromise, fulfilling their duty and dedicating themselves generously in service to the poor." That's why Pope Benedict says that the "martyrdom of ordinary life" is a "particularly important witness in the secularized societies of our time." Christians need to show that when given a choice between God and work, between God and an unjust law, between God and unfair demands from family members, even between God's will and their own, Christians will serve God. This witness of uncompromising fidelity, even in the face of persecution, threats, or death, is what moves others to conversion. This is the "peaceful battle of love," the Pope says, "that all Christians have to fight tirelessly."[21]

In the quotation above Pope Benedict affirmed descent as the moral choice all Christians face daily in choosing to identify with Christ in his self-emptying. To put aside one's selfish interest in favor of another's good is in reality a way to practice self-denial and sacrifice. To choose to put God and his will over one's own is to serve God faithfully and to cultivate obedience. Self-emptying in descent becomes an ordinary martyrdom to which Christians subscribe whenever they choose willingly to make sacrifices for a redemptive good such as going the second mile. These sacrifices are not just inward and spiritual. They are outward and material. They are the product of patient effort and consistency of practice over time. Such a lifestyle that results from the conscious decision to emulate Christ's actions in descent captures the attention of the secular world and exposes it to the sinful self-centered human condition.

As a moral authority the outward manifestation of voluntary poverty as lived through simplicity strikes to the root of human selfishness and provokes conscience. A

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[21]Fr. Roger J. Landry, "The Martyrdom of Ordinary Life", http://catholicpreaching.com/index.php?content=articles&articles=20071102anchor (accessed June 4, 2012).

faithful return to Christ's call to discipleship as outlined in Matthew 16:24-25 can only result in a transforming movement led and empowered by the Holy Spirit to defeat the powers of darkness, "Only by rejecting poverty and by making itself poor in order to protest against it can the Church preach something that is uniquely its own: 'spiritual poverty,' that is, the openness of man and history to the future promised by God."[22]

[22] G. Gutiérrez, "Poverty", *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 4, E. Fahlbusch and G. W. Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 2005), 308.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The themes of descent in Christ's life signal a holiness characterized by love, humility, sacrifice, and submission to authority. Throughout the process of research it has been a growing conviction that a theology of descent characterized by voluntary poverty is a necessary requirement to faithfully fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ for those who would be disciples. As disciples who emulate Christ's actions in descent, the moral and spiritual authority necessary for the work of transformation will be made available.

This chapter will seek to explore the relationship between affluence and discipleship. Christian discipleship must reflect themes of descent if Christian discipleship is to bear a moral and spiritual authority that carries weight with the culture to which it witnesses and brings about genuine transformation.

The term "voluntary poverty" is used as a synonym for the various themes of descent in the life of Christ. Descent represents movement downward. Descent is the willingness to lower oneself with respect to the status, power, pride, and selfishness which are proclivities of original sin within the human heart. Within scripture there is a poverty of spirit which is a necessary prerequisite for salvation. Mt 5:3 This is chiefly a humility which admits one's need for God. Secondly, voluntary poverty is a moral quality of Christian character which reflects the *agape* modeled by Christ. It is an impoverishing or displacing of the self for the redemptive good of another. Every act of

agape love is in reality an expression of descent because the prideful self-life with all its respective vanities is made to lower or bow itself in submission to a higher good. Third, poverty becomes a lifestyle of simplicity when voluntarily practiced as an outward expression of this inward quality of moral character.

Humbling and Exaltation: Central Principle of Voluntary Poverty

In the early hymn known as the *kenosis* in Philippians 2:6-11 the *agape* of Christ is celebrated in his movement downward where he exchanged the perfect beatitude he shared with the Godhead to become human. The first three verses in the kenotic hymn focus on Christ's actions. The last three focus on God's actions. A direct causality exists between the two.

The glory Christ shared with the Father was not forsaken by force. It was freely given up in order to take a lesser glory of a servant.[1] *Word Biblical Commentary* believes this hymn arose in commemoration of Christ's actions with towel and basin at the Last Supper where parallels are so precise, "it is difficult to consider them as mere coincidences."[2] In the *kenosis* or "emptying", Christ impoverished himself of the glory he shared with God in order to assume the humility and attitude of a servant. His actions at the Last Supper form a picture of majesty for the early Church: God's ministrations to his children cleansing them of their dirt much as a mother with her children. The symbols of towel and basin reveal the heart of God in Trinitarian love and the Philippian hymn commemorating Christ's actions serves to comfort as well as to inspire.

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[1]Jac. J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon,* vol. 8 of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), 80.

[2]Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians,* vol. 43 of *Word Biblical Commentary,* David A. Hubbard, John D. W. Watts, Ralph P. Martin, and Glenn W. Barker, ed. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 78.

In finding himself in human form Christ further humbled himself and became obedient unto "the specific undesirable state" of death.[3] Calvin says, "This was extreme abasement, especially when we take into view the kind of death, which he (Paul) immediately adds, with the view of enhancing it."[4] The voluntary impoverishment of the Godhead in Christ's movement in descent therefore becomes the basis for the Church's moral authority, "The hymn, therefore, presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action."[5] But Christ's actions in descent not only lay a foundation for a moral authority which holds weight among men, the scripture also lets it be known that his actions in descent had spiritual ramifications, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil 2:9-11

The aspect of emptying, of voluntarily displacing the self-life and its interests for a higher and greater good, is central to the love referred to as *agape* in the scriptures. In descent Christ impoverished himself of the status he had with the Father in order to take on human form and sacrificed himself for the sake of reconciling humankind back to God. In descent he sacrificed his life and emptied hell. In abasing and lowering himself in this way a kingdom principle of reversal was put into play: God's hand of power was moved. A relationship of causality exists between the actions of Christ's voluntary self-humbling in the *kenosis* and in his descent into hell and the Father's conferral of moral and spiritual authority, "*Therefore* God has highly exalted him." Phil 2:9

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[3]"descent", New American Oxford Dictionary, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, USA).

[4]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 59.

[5]Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 79.

This is a central premise in descent. Voluntary poverty moves God's hand of power. Self-humbling results in exaltation. This is seen in Matthew 5:3 with respect to conversion where spiritual poverty initiates God's saving action necessary to enter the kingdom as a child of the faith. It is seen in the story of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus fourteen, a prefiguring of Christ's descent into hell, where the utter helplessness of the Israelites causes them to admit their need for God's saving action to deliver them from entrapment and create a way through which previously had not existed. Jesus himself ties conferral of honor to the voluntary self-humbling exhibited through a deliberate refusal to grasp after status, "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Lk 14:7-11 Christ, "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." Phil 2:6

In the kenotic hymn the reversal is one of supreme moral and spiritual authority, "and (God) bestowed on him the name that is above every name." Phil 2:9 This is true also of the passage in Luke 14:25-35 where Christ's call to a discipleship characterized by total renunciation, ie: voluntary poverty, is tied to the metaphor of salt as a moral authority in the life of Christian witness and mission. Whenever a person seeks to emulate and embrace the aspects of descent as modeled by Jesus Christ, such an action gives one's life an authority which witnesses to the culture to which one is sent.

Every sentient created being, fleshly and spiritual, must now acknowledge the supreme authority conferred upon Christ by the Father in consequence of Christ's voluntary impoverishment in descent. Through the humility and voluntary poverty that characterized Christ's actions in descent Christ defeated the powers of death and made a way open that previously had not existed. In

stripping the principalities and powers he modeled a way that was diametrically opposed to the antichrist systems of the world made up of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The way of voluntary poverty as lived through simplicity becomes the basis for a discipleship which has both moral and spiritual authority to fulfill God's redemptive mission on earth.

John Wesley Concerning Affluence

Part of the aim of this dissertation has been to discover what authoritative voices within church history have said regarding the relationship between wealth and discipleship. Is it possible for a wealthy Christian to embrace Christ's call to a discipleship characterized by self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience? If so, what would such a Christian lifestyle look like and what kind of authority would it have with regard to its witness? For John Wesley the aspect of wealth, though not sinful in and of itself, presented a very real threat to the genuineness of one's Christian faith, "It is not more sinful to be rich than to be poor, but it is dangerous beyond expression."[6] For Wesley the issue that mattered most was not the amount one possessed but how it was to be utilized in service to God and neighbor.[7]

Wesley interpreted wealth or affluence as, "having the conveniences of life and something over."[8] Wealth for Wesley meant having a surplus over and above the money

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[6]John Wesley, "The Rich Man and Lazarus", *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 250.

[7]Ibid., "The Danger of Riches", 9.

[8]*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, "The Rich Man and Lazarus", 250.

needed to support oneself and one's family with food, shelter, and clothing, and the means of supplying and carrying on one's business:

> I apprehend by a rich man here is meant not only a man who has immense treasures . . . but anyone that possesses more than the necessaries and conveniences of life. One that has food and raiment sufficient for himself and his family, and something over, is rich.[9]

As the years progressed toward the end of his life, Wesley became more and more convinced that outside of God's grace it was virtually impossible for a rich person to maintain an authentic Christianity.[10] Wesley's overriding concern was the snare riches could become to the body of Christ, inducing them into a false sense of security, complacency, and slumber. Riches were too closely allied with the unrighteousness of mammon. Mammon had power to cause a person to fall into idolatry by shifting one away from a lifestyle of trust and reliance upon God to prideful self-sufficiency.

Wesley was especially concerned for the vitality of the movement he had started, "Why is not the spiritual health of the people called Methodists recovered?"[11] He attributed the waning presence of the Holy Spirit upon their meetings to an increasing self-indulgence and soft lifestyle that was lackluster in its generosity. Because they were not giving all they could, Wesley accused the Methodists, "Ye are the men, some of the chief men, who continually grieve the

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[9]Ibid., "On Riches," 215.

[10]Ibid., 215. The sermon, "On Riches", was preached in 1788 when John Wesley was 85 years old: "The meaning of the Lord's assertion is this – that it is absolutely impossible unless by that power to which all things are possible that a rich man should be a Christian: to have the mind that was in Christ and walk as Christ walked."

[11]Ibid., "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity", 285. Preached in 1789.

Holy Spirit of God and in great measure stop his gracious influence from descending on our assemblies."[12] Wesley lamented how the very same virtues of industry and thrift, characteristics of a genuine Christian witness, were what led to the accumulation of riches, and "riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity."[13] He believed a stalwart stewardship was the only way to keep Christianity from undermining and destroying itself.[14]

He held a strict standard of stewardship with respect to authentic discipleship. The call to self-denial meant embracing a lifestyle of simplicity. In his sermon, *The Use of Money*, preached in 1760, Wesley laid forth his principles of Christian stewardship, "to gain all you can, save all you can, and to give all you can."[15] Wesley had preached on Luke 16:9, the subject of unrighteous mammon, some twenty-seven times between the years of 1741 and 1758.[16] In this sermon Wesley grounds complete renunciation necessary for a life of Christian discipleship in the example of Christ's self-giving, "Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son."[17]

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[12]*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity", 286.

[13]Ibid., 286.

[14]Ibid., 289.

[15]Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed., *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 350-357.

[16]Ibid., 347.

[17]Outler, ed., *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology,* 357.

Wesley saw that there was a direct connection between moral authority and a discipleship characterized by simplicity. "But why is self-denial so little practiced at present among Methodists? . . The more I observe and consider things, the more clearly it appears what is the cause of this . . . The Methodists grow more and more self-indulgent because they grow rich."[18] An affluent lifestyle was incompatible with the moral authority associated with faithful discipleship, "With few exceptions that nine in ten of these (Methodists) decreased in grace in the same proportion as they increased in wealth."[19]

Real Christianity was evidenced by the willingness of the believer to embrace Christ's mandate to self-denial, cross-bearing, and obedience. Riches were a hindrance toward this kind of discipleship. They hindered a person from loving God and neighbor; they were a hindrance to the spiritual poverty necessary for entrance into the kingdom because they rendered persons incapable of becoming "sensible of their defects" and thus "come to a true knowledge of themselves."[20] Riches made it more difficult for a Christian to sacrifice. Rather, they increased a person's desire for ease and for "going to heaven on a feather bed."[21] Riches made it nearly impossible for a person to have what Wesley termed a "yieldingness." A "yieldingness" was a readiness to submit to others. It

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[18]*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity", 289.

[19]Ibid., "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity", 289.

[20]Ibid., "On Riches", 216.

[21]*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, "The Danger of Riches", 7.

recognized authority and practiced submission. For Wesley, riches precluded Christ's call in Matthew 16:24 to embrace self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience.

In Wesley's theology, the chief evidence of an authentic discipleship would be a stewardship exercised in love of God and neighbor that generously sowed into the kingdom all that was above what was necessary for a plain existence. As regards ownership and property, Wesley expressly forbade the laying up of treasures on earth. He saw hoarding as incompatible with Christian life and witness and equated it with robbing the poor.[22] Wesley made it clear that affluence was ordained by God for the relief of suffering and was to be employed so that others might have the necessities for life.[23]

A Trinitarian Perspective on Property

In his book, *God the Economist*, M. Douglas Meeks, Professor of Theology and Wesleyan Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School, critically examines modern economic theory in light of Trinitarian theology.[24] His purpose is to promote a biblically informed theory of economics which reflects the social aspects of the Trinity as opposed to a Westernized version of God who has come to take on attributes reminiscent of extreme individualism. Meeks believes modalistic interpretations of God laid the foundation for a radical autonomous individuality in Western civilization, "The description of God as a

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[22] *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5, "Sermon on the Mount", 375.

[23] *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, "The Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity", 286.

[24] M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 110.

simple, undivided, atomistic essence is the description of the human being as private individual in our economic life today."[25]

Meeks tries to show how radical individuality has been used to support an economic theory of property ownership which is exclusively private and therefore selfishly neglectful toward the needs of others. He questions narrow concepts of God which justify affluence when people in other parts of the world are suffering and denied means to the most basic of life's necessities. The self-interest bred by modern economic philosophy is opposite to Christ's call to self-denial and Christ's mandate to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Meeks calls all Christians to be agents of God's righteousness by embracing a more just theory of economics which is scripturally and theologically informed, "We nevertheless find in the biblical traditions the shape of God's economy to which for Christians our economic systems should correspond as much as possible under the conditions of history."[26] Meeks uses the word "economy", taken from the Greek *oikos* meaning "house" and *nomos* meaning "law", to describe God as manager over the household. The household is the center of human livelihood: the center of production, distribution, and consumption of the necessities of life. As an economist, God oversees and administrates over all creation which itself is a type of household. The household becomes an analogy of the human arrangement for what it takes to live well.

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[25]Meeks, *God the Economist* , 110, "The doctrine of God in Western teaching has often conceived God as a self-possessor, a self-proprietor . . . With Augustine the West came to think of the Trinity on the model of the radically individual human being who constitutes himself, is proper to himself, and is property of himself. On this model God exists for God's self, God is proper to God's self, and that means God's self is the property of God."

[26]Ibid., 3.

Of particular interest is Meeks' discussion of property or claims upon property in light of voluntary poverty. His thesis is that private ownership of property in modern market theory is unbiblical and unjust when it is used to exclude others from what it takes to live well. He advocates a voluntary redistribution of wealth where Christians have a moral obligation to share out of their abundance for relief of the poor, "Using property justly means the rich are accountable for meeting the essential needs of the poor from their surplus wealth."[27] In this way he agrees with Wesley's statements and with church tradition on the right use of money.[28] He supports this statement by drawing from church tradition and from Christ's teachings concerning the eye of the needle and Christ's narrative of Lazarus and Dives. Mt 19:23-30, Mk 10:23-31, Lk 16:19-31, 18:24-30

Meeks does not advocate an ascetic ideal of total renunciation. Rather, Meeks advocates a lifestyle of simplicity which subordinates wealth to the greater good of the kingdom. He points out that Christ's command in Luke 14:33 to relinquish all in order to be his follower was reflective of an older tradition which focused on prescriptions against idolatry. Biblical tradition makes it clear that riches have a way of possessing the possessor. Idolatry is ultimately a loss of freedom because a person's dependence shifts from reliance upon God to fearful control and self-protection. This can lead to a shirking of one's responsibility towards one's neighbor.

Jesus' command to renounce possessions had more to do with the worldly view of property as commodities to be exchanged as opposed to property as gifts to be freely

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[27]Meeks, *God the Economist,* 122.

[28]Albert Outler and Richard P. Hetzenrater, ed., *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 349. "In the hands of his children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked."

relinquished and consumed. When the value of property is directly tied to its marketability every exchange exacts something of equal value. The exchange of commodities aims for an equilibrium where participants walk away owing nothing to one another. This is antithetical to the idea of gift-giving where an imbalance is created and an obligation is enjoined. Understanding property as a gift to be unconditionally shared reflects the ultimate gift of *charis* in Jesus Christ's self-emptying and sacrifice:

> The fundamental logic of the economy of God is that Jesus Christ is the *charis* (which means both gift and grace), the unexcelled generosity by which God has gifted us with God's own life in order to redeem us from the nothingness of death, and that this gift is what obligates, moves, and empowers our lives for serving life against death in the world.[29]

The unconditional love displayed through Christ's charis in descent becomes the moral basis for his call to a life of discipleship characterized by self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience.

Although all possessions are to be celebrated and enjoyed as God's gracious gifts, Christ-followers must understand God maintains a claim on property which puts the needs of the household before self-interest:

> Ownership cannot mean the free choice to do anything one wants to do with property. There can be no such thing as absolute ownership. Property is for use, not for holding or hoarding. To be possessed justly, property must be used according to its nature to meet human needs and create human community.[30]

An obligation underlies all possessions. It is the obligation to keep God's command to love one's neighbor by building a kingdom economy which invites sharing with those who have nothing. He argues that Christ taught that property was primarily instrumental.

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[29]Meeks, *God the Economist,* 119.

[30]Meeks, 122.

Its intrinsic potential for either good or evil lies in how it is used, "Property is meant to serve the livelihood of others, not their domination and exploitation."[31] In this way Meeks agrees with Wesley and the Church fathers that money is in and of itself neutral. Its value lies in how it is used to glorify God and to build God's household. Thinking of possessions in this way grounds them in the *agape* of God where self-interest is displaced for the redemptive good of another.

Meeks' main apologetic for his formulation of God as Economist comes from the Eastern Orthodox Trinitarian tradition which defines God's unity in terms of the love of a family. The Cappadocian fathers introduced a concept of mutual coinherence known as *perichoresis*. *Perichoresis* teaches that there is no absolute exclusive right among the three Persons of the Godhead. Everything is shared within the divine community with the exception of each Person's personal attributes and unique callings, "The social doctrine of the Trinity maintains the distinctiveness of the persons as well as the unity of their community of love." [32]

Meeks looks to this social conception of the Trinity in order to formulate an economic theory characterized by community, giving, sharing, and otherness. He believes this commonality, or *koinonia*, of the Trinity is the foundation for how kingdom economics should be organized:

> The critical retrieval of the Trinity today in relation to the current problems of property should reconstruct the social doctrine of the Trinity. It would emphasize that God is not an indivisible, self-sufficient individual. God is not a self-possessor. God is rather a

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[31]Meeks, *God the Economist,* 122.

[32]Ibid., 112.

> community, a community of persons united in giving themselves to each other and to the world.[33]

The Trinitarian pattern of preferential, self-giving love forms the moral basis for Christ's call to self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience. With respect to possessions it supports the biblical witness that money and possessions are to be subordinated to God's kingdom economics which make room for the marginalized and the poor, "The household of God will not be established unless the righteousness of God gives entrance to the poor."[34] Property is not to be hoarded but to be, "used according to its nature to meet human needs and create human community."[35] To accumulate goods beyond what is necessary for a quality of life is ethically wrong when the poor are in urgent need of the goods which the rich possess, "the rich have a compensatory obligation in justice to bestow from their surplus goods what is needed to sustain the deprived."[36]

In summary, Meeks' book challenges current authoritarian concepts of God influenced by a modern economic theory which elevate the interests of the individual over against the greater good of the human community. Meeks seeks to present a more just and biblically faithful economic worldview which is grounded in the idea of God as egalitarian community and preferential, self-giving love. This pattern in the Trinity forms the basis for a just economy that is righteous and makes entrance for all humanity to the

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[33]Meeks, *God the Economist,* 111.

[34]Ibid., 116.

[35]Ibid., 122.

[36]Ibid., 122. Endnote, 210: "Gregory of Nyssa says, "if one should seek to be absolute possessor of all, refusing even a third or a fifth [of his possessions] to his brothers, then he is a cruel tyrant, a savage with whom there can be no dealing, an insensate beast gloatingly shutting its jaws over the meal it will not share." Quoted by William Walsh and P.Langan, "Patristic Social Consciousness: The Church and the Poor," in *The Faith that Does Justice,* ed. John C. Haughey (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 127.

means necessary to sustain and enjoy life. Meeks understanding of God's economy also provides the moral rationale for a discipleship characterized by either simplicity or evangelical poverty.

Conversion and Genuine Discipleship

In his book, *Transforming Worldviews*, Paul Hiebert raises a question of enculturation with respect to twenty-first century Western Christianity.[37] In order for genuine conversion to take place Hiebert says a person's worldview must also be converted and brought into conformity with a biblical worldview just as are one's behaviors and beliefs. In other words a Christian is not thoroughly converted until their worldview is also brought under the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and conforms to the worldview presented in the Bible.

The idea of a paganized version of Christianity unfaithful to the contours of a biblical gospel is a valid and important point for the Church to consider. What does a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ look like? How disparate is the Western culture of unprecedented affluence from the worldview of Jesus Christ? What behaviors, beliefs, and worldview are necessary to be a genuine follower of Jesus Christ in the midst of twenty-first century affluent, postmodern, waning Western civilization? What would Jesus think of the level of affluence that characterizes the lifestyles of Christians in America in light of the increasing misery that poverty and squalor enjoin around the world? What is the responsibility of Christian stewardship in the West in light of the fact that one in every six persons on the planet lives in complete and utter destitution?

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[37]Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 315.

After examining the subject of voluntary poverty and themes of descent in the Bible, in history, and in theology, the evidence substantially supports voluntary simplicity as a necessary requirement to faithfully fulfill Christ's call to discipleship. Christian discipleship must reflect themes of descent if Christian discipleship is to bear a moral and spiritual authority that carries weight with the culture to which it witnesses and brings about genuine transformation.

Rediscovering the work of simplicity in spiritual formation has potential to reignite a more vibrant spirituality in the Western Church. The Church in the West is in decline as regards membership and attendance. It is affluent and worldly. The call of Christ to embrace simplicity holds the potential to radically witness to a society which struggles with pride, money, and power. Reissuing a call to a discipleship characterized by descent holds the potential to ignite a movement which moral authority is enhanced through a more radical living out of Christ's counsels for moral and spiritual perfection.

The call to simplicity is the call to follow Christ in his self-emptying. It is a call to translate *agape* in a way that is concrete as well as sacrificial. One chooses to do with less so that one can sow richly into the lives of others. There is a reward for such a choice. It is the promise of a blessedness that is experienced now and in the future an eternal inheritance to be repaid by Christ at his return.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOPICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Problem Identified

In his book, *Radical*, David Platt calls the Church to repent of the self-referential values that have contributed to an enculturated version of Christianity and have compromised Christ's mandates for discipleship. In the West, Platt says, Christians have, "a dangerous tendency to misunderstand, minimize, and even manipulate the gospel in order to accommodate our assumptions and desires. As a result, we desperately need to understand how much of the gospel is American and how much is biblical."[1] Platt echoes Paul Hiebert in suggesting that an enculturated version of the gospel has become standardized as the norm for Western Christian discipleship and practice.

The Church needs to return to a lifestyle of simplicity in solidarity with Jesus value of voluntary poverty if it desires the prophetic authority to challenge Western notions of economic exclusivity and rampant materialistic consumerism. Values should translate into behaviors. Martin Luther said, "We are saved by faith alone but not by a faith that remains alone." Our faith must translate into works if it is to be genuine and effective: a muscular witness that confronts an affluent society neglectful of much of the misery and suffering enjoined around the majority world. The call to examine Western

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[1]David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From The American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010), 28.

values and priorities in light of known human and environmental need is really the prophetic voice of the Holy Spirit seeking to bring correction to his Church in the West.

The problem is that the Western Church has accommodated to the self-interest bred by modern concepts of privatization and property ownership and is failing in its mission to form young disciples who embrace a lifestyle of altruistic service and simplicity in solidarity with Christ. This failure has adversely affected the Church's witness. There is a need for American Christians to return to a commitment to simplicity in order to confront affluent Western society with the reality of poverty and global issues related to sustainability. The self-referential nature indicative of the Western values of hyper-individualism and autonomy are antithetical to the kenotic value of voluntary poverty modeled by Jesus in his descent. As such, these modern values make it more difficult for a Westerner to embrace Jesus' call to a discipleship that reflects the otherness intrinsic to agape and formation of the covenantal ties needful for true community.

Human and Environmental Need

Part of the problem in calling the Church back to a lifestyle of simplicity in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty is that American Christians do not like the term "poverty." Even leaders within the New Monasticism movement try to steer clear of the term, "There's nothing holy about poverty . . . No need to make a vow, except for the promise to care for one another.[2] Although it is agreed that the poverty associated with forced destitution is antithetical to the abundant life promised by the gospel, there still remains a need for American Christians to be confronted with the

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[2]Scott A. Bessenecker, ed., *Living Mission: The Vision and Voices of the New Friars*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 8.

reality of poverty in contemporary society and around the world. Affluence has compromised the Church's witness by an attachment to the good life.

The poverty that characterizes the reality of involuntary destitution and the injustice of inequitable distribution of planetary resources and opportunities are unholy and antithetical to the values of Jesus Christ. Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove make reference to *Slumdog Millionaire* as an Oscar winning movie which caught the American public up to speed on the reality of life in an urban slum city.[3] Unfortunately the American public, and most especially the Church within the United States, did not react in any pronounced way to the movie's graphic depictions of slum crowding, violence, human trafficking and lack of sanitation and infrastructure needed to support the most basic of human needs. There were no visible expressions of outrage such images of poverty should have enjoined in the developed West. Unprecedented affluence in Western civilization has served to insulate American Christianity from the reality of the squalor and unhealthy living conditions in the majority world.

Across the world urban slum growth is outpacing urban growth by a wide margin.[4] By 2025 sixty-five percent of the earth's population is projected to be living in urban centers. Half of these urban dwellers will be classified as urban poor.[5] What is the responsibility of Christian stewardship in the West in light of the fact that one in every six persons on the planet lives in complete and utter destitution? Americans make up five

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[3]Bessenecker, *Living Mission*, 8.

[4]"2007 Human Development Report (HDR)", United Nations Development program, November 27, 2007, 25; http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats#src12 (accessed October 22, 2012).

[5]David Boyd, *You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World: The Power of Local Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2008), 17.

percent of the world's population but consume one-third of the world's resources.[6] Issues related to sustainability are forcing an awakening upon the American conscience for the need for change. Edward O. Wilson, scientist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author commented:

> The constraints of the biosphere are fixed . . . The bottleneck through which we are passing is real. It should be obvious to anyone not in a euphoric delirium that whatever humanity does or does not do, Earth's capacity to support our species is approaching the limit.[7]

One of the indicators which Wilson uses is food. In 2010 the world production of grains was approximately two billion tons per year, enough to feed an estimated ten billion Indians whose diet consists primarily of grains supplemented by very little meat. The same amount of tonnage, however, figuratively could only support an estimated 2.5 billion Americans because most of the grain would be diverted into livestock and poultry.[8] Sustainability issues related to the earth's diminishing capacity to renew itself because of climate change, pollution, habitat destruction, and population growth are forcing a crisis in terms of the West's lifestyle choices and habits of consumption. As Anna M. Clark asks, "Who is making the sacrifice for us to live so large?"[9]

In his book, *You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World: The Power of Local Cross-Cultural Ministry*, David Boyd makes the point that massive demographic shifts related to urban migration and population reduction are creating a movement of

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[6]Clark, Anna M., *Green, American Style: Becoming Earth-Friendly and Reaping the Benefits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 12.

[7]Ibid., 43.

[8]Ibid., 42

[9]Ibid., 25.

people from underdeveloped nations to the economically developed countries of the West. Boyd's thesis is that the Church in America does not need to relocate in order to engage in cross-cultural mission. The mission field is moving to the West.

This is in contra-distinction to the first mark of the New Monasticism cited by Jonathan Hartgrove, "location to abandoned places of empire." Although it is Christ-like to incarnate oneself in mission by moving to an urban slum, it is not practical for all American Christians to relocate in order to fulfill Christ's mandate to identify with the poor by living among socio-economically marginalized people groups. One question that naturally arises is how can affluent American Christians emulate Christ's value in self-emptying without having to relocate? Poverty immersion experiences such as short-term mission trips help Americans better understand and create genuine compassion for the poor, but is there a model that can better direct the expenses associated with such a trip toward relieving human suffering while encouraging a missional ethic which is personal and local and which will remain ongoing? Is there a model that facilitates integration of middle and upper income American Christians with those in their communities who are struggling?

This chapter will look briefly at two current movements within the Church that have embraced either simplicity or voluntary poverty in an attempt to faithfully identify with Christ in his life and ministry. It should be noted that the term "emergent" focuses on "other." The term "missional" speaks more specifically to an intentionality of going outside to engage the culture. The movements touched upon in this chapter are emergent in that they are another way of being the church. They differ from modern notions in their

approach to worship and ministry. They also are more missional in the way they conduct outreach.

New Monasticism

New Monasticism is a renewal movement taking place within mainstream American Protestantism where Christians and others are answering the call to live in intentional community and shared mission. Some leaders within the movement include Viv Grigg, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Shane Claiborne, Scott Bessenecker, Elaine Heath, and Scott Kisker. Early threads of the movement can be traced to Dorothy Day's and Peter Maurin's Catholic Worker Movement founded in 1933 and John M. Perkins' Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) formally established in 1989. New Monasticism expands upon Perkins' emphases of reconciliation, relocation, and redistribution with the additions of intentional spiritual formation and strong church ties.

New Monasticism is ecumenical in its draw across denominational lines involving Christians from every branch of the Church and even disciples of other faiths such as Buddhism and Judaism.[10] The chief focus is the desire to foster loving relationships characterized by grace and which are compassionate in any effort to bring about social justice. New Monasticism is both contemplative and missional. Current voices within the movement stress the importance of the horizontal flowing from the vertical where contemplation and worship feed and inform ministry outreach to the poor and marginalized.

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[10]See William Thiele and The School of Contemplative Living in New Orleans, Louisiana: http://www.thescl.net (accessed June 27, 2012).

In his book, *Living Mission: The Vision and Voices of New Friars*, Scott Bessenecker identifies five signs which signal this movement as a work of the Holy Spirit and which identify the New Monasticism with the monastic orders of old. The signs are incarnation, community, mission, margin, and devotion.[11] God is calling followers of Jesus to new configurations of Body culture which are organized around shared orthodoxy and a common rule which governs their lives together. The communities of "new friars" practice hospitality much like a family and seek to embody God's presence in demonstrable ways that are material and which witness to God's love.

New Monasticism differs from the old monasticism however by its willingness to embrace women in leadership as well as allowing for a diversity of vocations outside of ecclesial ordination and in its collaborative makeup between both Catholics and Protestants. Bessenecker also traces some of the history of the movement with credit going to the work of Viv Grigg and Anglican clergyperson John Stott who penned portions of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant which advocated a gospel that not only transformed lives but translated into systemic change of social systems, "a gospel with teeth." [12]

The strengths of new monasticism are three-fold. These include its faithfulness to live as closely as possible to the demands of the gospel, monasticism's draw to foster authentic community, and the potential for New Monasticism to be realized in various configurations.

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[11]Scott Bessenecker, ed., *Living Mission: The Vision and Voices of New Friars* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 19.

[12]Ibid., 23.

Living as a counter-cultural community which seeks to live as closely as possible in conformity to the gospel creates power to be salt and light. As a community it offers the hope of forming mature disciples who have embraced Christ's call to self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience and who are progressing in love under the sanctifying tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Some of the current configurations range from new monastic communities anchored in the support of existing congregations, such as single mothers and widows living together as one household, to networked communities which follow a common rule and meet weekly for worship and spiritual formation, "In a given neighborhood several households could live in community and form one house church."[13]

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is a leading voice within the movement. In his book, New Monasticism, he presents the history behind the movement and offers insights into the practical aspects of what it takes to live in proximity with the poor, to redistribute wealth, and live in community.[14] He champions an economic theory based upon biblical revelation and advocates nonviolence as a path to peace. The writer found in his book a catholicity which allows for diversity of belief and leaves room for the Holy Spirit to continue to shape the contours of this renewal movement.

In their book, *Longing for Spring*, Elaine Heath and Scott Kisker introduce broad themes associated with the movement and point out the many parallels New Monasticism shares with early Methodism. Both Methodism and New Monasticism emphasize spiritual formation within community, adhering to a common rule, and inward and

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[13]Elaine A. Heath and Scott T. Kisker, *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Community* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 57.

[14]Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2008).

outward holiness. For Heath and Kisker, the New Monasticism is very much a reinterpretation of early Methodism.

Of special note in Heath's and Kisker's book is the similarity of themes the writer has explored related to affluence and *kenosis*. Kisker supports Wesley's belief that affluence undermines Christianity, "The wealthier we become . . . the less we depend on the Trinity for our daily bread, and the less willing we are to live according to the norms and strictures of scriptural holiness."[15] Like Douglas Meeks, Kisker looks to the social aspects of the Trinity to inform his understanding of economics. He also agrees with Wesley that there is an authoritative witness to the broader culture which is a direct consequence of the willingness of members to live in voluntary poverty or simplicity.

Heath borrows a term from mystical theology, "*ecstasis*" or "going out of ourselves", to refer to holiness. The idea she may be referencing is the social holiness preached by early Methodists which emphasized acts of charity and solidarity with the poor. For Heath, mission that is literally lived out in the streets and in ministry to one's neighbors is a form of holiness or "*ecstasis*."[16] Heath also uses terms such as "kenotic emptying" and "kenotic membership."[17] The idea is one of self-emptying in service to others as an expression of love of God and neighbor, "The only way the church is going to change these perceptions is to return to a kenotic, missional vocation in which our identity is found in Philippians 2."[18] The perceptions Heath is referring to are the negative

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[15]Elaine A. Heath and Scott T. Kisker, *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Community* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010) 13.

[16]Heath, 10.

[17]Heath, 47, 54-55.

[18]Heath, 58.

stereotypes of Christians held by the culture. She also notes that a "voluntary poverty" goes with any call for clergy who may wish to be involved with new monasticism.[19]

The similarities of themes studied throughout the process of this writer's research such as voluntary poverty, *kenosis*, self-emptying, *agape* love, and spiritual authority are encapsulated in this reinterpretation of monasticism. The writer feels, however, a concern for the primacy of Scripture and orthodoxy. As New Monasticism continues to take shape, it is important that those in the forefront not allow the movement to be subverted by pluralism. The guiding ethic of love, which is the preeminent virtue of the movement, is vital and necessary to any authentic Christian witness. However, love separated from orthodoxy is just another form of humanism. Doctrine *is* important. As an instrument of evangelism, communal living where members are committed to a common rule and exercise grace in their relationships is a powerful tool to those who are marginalized or persecuted for their sexual orientation, race, or religion. The challenge for the New Monasticism will be to maintain orthodoxy while allowing grace for exploration of faith. However, the central revelation of Jesus Christ as the only name under heaven by which persons can be saved should not be compromised if New Monastic communities are to retain their power for healing and transformation of the human condition.

Missional Church Movement and The Order of Mission

In the 2004 groundbreaking book, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*, Hirsch and Frost discussed the contours of Western Christianity in light of post-Christendom. They predicted that the Church of the

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[19]Heath, *Longing for Spring*, 47.

twenty-first century will become more missional as opposed to institutional and attractional. In a missional church an effort is made to interpret the gospel in the context of the culture to which it is sent in ministry. The missional church moves beyond the four walls of the traditional 1950's model church and seeks to infiltrate the culture, "The missional church shapes itself to fit that context in order to transform it for the sake of the kingdom of God."[20]

Christendom is that period of Church practice from the fourth century on which solidified in the eleventh century as a political body made up of church and state.[21] Hirsch's and Frost's thesis is that the Church shifted from a dynamic, organic, and revolutionary movement that was counter-cultural in its essence to a state-approved institutionalized religion during the centuries following the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. In light of this, current movements throughout the Church today are in reality the hand of God working to renew the Church and bring it back to more organic forms that better facilitate the human need for authentic community and meaningful service.

The missional Church of the twenty-first century will be incarnational, messianic, and apostolic. It will go to where the sub-cultures are and identify with them in order to win them. Current conversations among missiologists emphasize the need to raise up indigenous leaders who are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating.

A shift away from Western missionary methods to a contextualization of the gospel that respects the values and traditions native to a culture is a sign that new wineskins are being readied. As the center of Christianity shifts south and east, majority

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[20]Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 7.

[21]Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 8.

world Christians are leading the way toward renewal because their understanding of church is more organic and relational than the Western model. The Western model with its values of independence and individuality conducts church more like a business that is identified by its programs and activities. Majority world Christians understand church more as a household or family that embeds others with their values as they share their lives together and practice hospitality.

The missional Church is shifting away from a Greek dualism to a messianic spirituality that is more holistic and celebrative of the human body and abundance. Its leadership seeks to be more reliant upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit and less hierarchal in its authority structures. Its core task will be to engage the culture without compromising the gospel.

Two years after *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Hirsch published *The Forgotten Ways*. This book builds on *The Shaping of Things to Come* by endeavoring to identify elements central to a missional ethos. Hirsch notes that elements common to Jesus' movements in history and which resulted in unprecedented growth are, "a passionate love of God, prayer, and incarnational practice."[22] Hirsch recognizes that in order for the Church to more effectively engage in mission the Church will need to embrace a more radical expression of Christianity.[23] These elements are termed by Hirsch as the "missional DNA" and they are responsible for the exponential growth within the early Church and in the contemporary Chinese church of today.

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[22]Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 21.

[23]Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 20.

Of special interest is the introduction in *The Forgotten Ways* to the concept of chaos theory and its contribution to formulating a missional ethos. As the Church in the West examines itself with regard to missiology in an increasingly unstable environment, it has begun to extrapolate principles from chaotic theory. This is in response to the recognition that the Church is ultimately organic and is made up of living, breathing human beings as opposed to a static entity reminiscent of modern notions regarding the nature of the universe, "The understanding of human organization in terms of complex living systems is likely to lead to new insights into the nature of adaptability."[24] Seeing itself more as a dynamic living organism and in an endeavor to challenge assumptions, the Church has come to realize it can learn much about life from the study of nature and organic systems.

In chaos theory an organism's chance of survival is commensurate with its adaptability, "the adaptive challenge exists in situations where an organism must adapt or change in order to improve its chances for survival."[25] Two impulses are primarily responsible for forcing an organism to adapt: either threat or opportunity. Hirsch came to realize that in the twenty-first century the Church was living in a time of "rapid discontinuous change" brought on by changing technologies and globalization. This environment presents both a threat and an opportunity. In such an atmosphere where the future cannot be forecast with any assurance of probability, "chaos is often the sweet spot where innovation takes place if handled correctly."

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[24]Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 251.

[25]Ibid., 247.

In their effort to understand the forces in chaos theory which optimize adaptability, Frost and Hirsch came out with another book in 2011, *The Faith of Leap*. In this book Frost and Hirsch explore the concept of liminality as the seedbed for transforming innovation to occur. This accords with Howard J. Snyder's discovery that renewal in the life and mission of the Church is often precipitated by crisis. Decay and death become the liminal place out of which the Church is forced to examine her core task in the world. This gives the Church the grace to explore and venture forth from her core allowing for discovery and fresh perspective. The Church must explore the liminal places where change is conceived if it is to recover a fresh impetus and courage for mission to be effective in the twenty-first century, "to obey is often counter cultural and counterintuitive and it requires risk."[26]

The Order of Mission (TOM) is a missional movement taking place on college campuses on six continents across the world. It defines itself as a neo-monastic order dedicated to lifelong vows of simplicity, purity, and accountability and whose members are asked to abide by a shared Rule of Life to govern their worship.[27] Its members see themselves as missionaries whose primary purpose is to plant missional communities on college campuses and equip future leaders through "huddles" of intentional discipling. TOM is comprised of Christians from all denominations and faith traditions.

The Order of Mission arose out of the church growth movement of the 1990's which divided church into three components of cell, congregation, and celebration. Leaders in TOM include Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, Anglican priests from St.

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[26]Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure, and Courage* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 31.

[27]The Order of Mission, http://www.missionorder.org (accessed August 30, 2013).

Thomas Church in Sheffield, United Kingdom. Breen and Absalom were influenced by church growth conversations and began to look for ways to foster stronger relational ties needful for genuine community and meaningfulness.

Their work led them to focus on developing clusters or small groups that lived ministry and mission together. However, they found that clusters alone were not enough to bring about revitalization, "We discovered that the small groups (cells) that wanted to maintain a missional outlook were 'small enough to care but not big enough to dare.'"[28] Breen found that mission is better supported and more easily maintained when spread among mid-sized groups made up of twenty to fifty people. Therefore his approach is reminiscent of the household model of church where small households or clusters join together informally numerous times a month for celebration and accountability.

Extrapolations for the Project Model

In 2004 M. Rex Miller, communications theorist, futurist, and theologian, foretold the move away from large mega-churches in favor of human-scaled community, "What is a human-scaled community? There is a desperate cry to counterbalance society's pace and fragmentation with oases of cohesion."[29] Miller had foreseen how trends related to technology would out-distance the human capacity to make meaning in a world increasingly fragmented by change. New Monasticism and The Order of Mission have

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[28]Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *3dM Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (Sheriar Press, 2010), 16. Breen started 3dM, *3 Dimension Ministries,* which purpose is to provide coaching and content for equipping campus pastors and ministry leaders.

[29]M. Rex Miller, *The Millennium Matrix* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 80.

been two such moves toward human-scaled community, "the Christ the world sees will be reflected in the quality of the church's relationships."[30]

Many of the elements found in current conversations relating to renewal and mission can be found in Miller's prescient work. Of interest, however, is Miller's discussion regarding leadership qualities needed to be effective in mission. Drawing from the design criteria for North Atlantic oil vessels, Miller draws parallels from technology to identify qualities necessary for leadership in the twenty-first century. These design criteria have been adapted in an attempt to extrapolate some principles which the writer considers are necessary for an effective twenty-first century missional church plant.

These qualities summarize the best of the New Monastic and missional church conversations. A living church poised for redemptive mission and community takes risks by extending grace for discovery of new truths and fresh interpretations while maintaining a core committed to the orthodoxy. Ministry contexts should seek to be personal, communal, interactive, highly networked, deeply aligned in their Christian values and theology, and widely distributed, developing multiple contexts for shared participation and engagement.

Leaders within the church household will need to live in proximity to members in order to embed the culture with values from shared Bible study, prayer, and evangelism. Reliance upon the Holy Spirit and a place accorded the gifts needful to edify the church and establish the kingdom should be given preference. A premium must be placed upon developing authentic community where members invest in one another personally beyond matters relating to outreach or mission.

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[30]Quote by M. Rex Miller, speaker at Vineyard Church, Campellsville, KY, 2004.

Lastly, the living body must begin to formulate an infrastructure that will sustain growth for the sake of building a strong, redemptive community that is holistic in its approach to an abundant life and effective in bringing about community transformation while remaining self-sustaining for years to come. Greater participation through involvement of members in planning ministry and worship, more permeable boundaries socially so that members are focused outward rather than inward, and multiple entrance points into its communal life and ministries are other areas of focus.

The practical aspects of the writer's model for embracing the themes of descent as lived by Christ and with respect to the potential such themes hold to revitalize the Western Church will emphasize a basic structure over stricture, coordination versus control, and the space needful to slow the pace. Lastly, a confession and catholicity such as found in a common rule will serve to govern the community and keep it centered in a biblical revelation of God. This is over and against any dogmatism and absolutism. The purpose is to assist in remaining centered in orthodoxy while allowing members to formulate their own theology as they live out their faith in response to the Scriptures and in accordance to the dictates of their consciences.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT

The proposed solution designed to address the need for young disciples to embrace a lifestyle of altruistic service and simplicity in solidarity with Christ was the creation of LINK, *Living Incarnationally and Networking for the Kingdom*. Drawing from the New Monastic movement, LINK was designed to provide a communal context that promoted the relational ties necessary to embed a culture with the values of Jesus. The overall purpose of the project was to link students to a lifelong commitment of simplicity through mentoring and immersive experiences followed by guided theological reflection and vocational exploration.[1]

Through the generous support of the Lilly Endowment Inc., a substantial grant of fifty-thousand dollars was awarded to Lindsey's Christian Ministries department by the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE).[2] NetVUE was created to foster theological and vocational exploration on college campuses. Approximately one-quarter of the grant, twelve-thousand dollars, was awarded directly for the purpose of establishing LINK.

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[1]In studying the biblical and historical foundations for the three great Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience it soon became clear that the classic Christian discipline of simplicity was one of several expressions advocated by the Church in an attempt to be faithful to the spirit of the Counsels as interpreted through the various teachings of Jesus concerning spiritual perfection and discipleship.

[2]http://www.cic.edu (accessed November, 2012).

Initially LINK was opened to all interested female students as well as offered as a practicum class where students could earn three-credit hours. The 2013 launch of LINK involved eight young women who agreed to organize their lives around a shared rule to govern their worship, shared mission, study, and fellowship. The project created a context of discipleship that invited students to displace the self-life with its respective interests for the good of others while strengthening community ties and without having to relocate in order to identify with the poor.

Figure 1.

SUMMARY OF LINK PROJECT COMPONENTS

PEOPLE	EVENTS	MEASURES	DEFINED OUTCOMES
Girls	Retreat	Retreat Evaluation	Otherness
Mentor	Rule of Life	2nd Mile Question	Simplicity Behaviors
	COPE	COPE Surveys	- Time and
	RROKI	NAS (2x)	- Spending Habits
	OAM Workshop	Interviews	
	Classes	Weekly Self-Reporting	
	Small Group	LINK Activities Rating	
	Common Purse	Philanthropy Test (2x)	
	Simplicity Challenge	Simplicity Scale (2x)	

Through weekly table-fellowship, guided study, worship, shared mission, and creation care and poverty-immersion experiences designed to introduce students to the values of simplicity, tests were conducted to measure the impact such experiences had on shaping students' values, beliefs and behaviors. Specifically participants were monitored to measure whether or not self-denial and sacrifice, or "otherness", had been adopted as a result of the LINK experiment and realized in behaviors conducive to a discipleship of descent.

These behaviors were defined as acts of service and sharing that would reflect a focus on others and which would comprise the joy that comes from giving of oneself for

the good of others. Participants were asked the 2nd Mile Question, "Did anyone ask something of you this week and you gave that and more? Explain." This question immediately was followed by a JOY-factor scale rating (Jesus, Others, You) where the participants could rate the emotional costs/gains associated with self-denial and servanthood.

The research looked to discover what factors best promoted otherness and the relationship between otherness and simplicity. Most particularly the research hoped to discover what factors were integral in shifting values into behaviors. Participants who embraced simplicity would evidence Jesus' values by lifestyle changes related to time and spending habits. The research also looked for a greater sense of freedom and wholeness and generosity of spirit that she suspected would be outcomes of detachment, the chief characteristic of the inward reality of simplicity. Detachment was identified earlier as freedom from worldly desires. It was expected that gifts for leadership would be developed and exercised through continued participation in future LINK community experiments.

Methodology

Following Creswell's checklist for designing a research project the doctoral candidate conducted a qualitative study utilizing mixed methods.[3] A qualitative study methodology was chosen because it allowed for a descriptive documentation that measures beliefs and behaviors through document analysis, survey questionnaires, and focus-group interviews. The research strategy involved a case study of eight female

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[3]John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2009), 174.

students who had agreed to participate in a communal discipleship experiment over a period of ten weeks with structured times for shared service, worship, and instruction. The purpose of the case study was to discover how the values of voluntary poverty modeled by Jesus impacted emerging adults' behaviors of altruistic service, sharing, and choice of vocation.

Project Design

The project design began with a retreat to build the relational ties necessary for fostering covenantal community. Students were asked to evaluate their before/after comfort levels with respect to interaction and trust. The retreat also introduced the students to the scope of the project and asked them to develop a shared rule to govern the next ten weeks of their lives together.

Three major immersive experiences were planned to help raise awareness and create empathy. The purpose of these experiences was to challenge students to reflect upon issues related to living responsibly in light of known human and environmental need. A poverty simulation, a creation care experience, and an older adult ministries workshop had been built into the project. The girls' responses were monitored with respect to empathy and altruism.

Throughout the ten-week project LINK participants met with the researcher for approximately three hours each week. One hour consisted of academic instruction with material drawn from the doctoral candidate's research and dissertation. The other two hours were more informal with a time for unstructured conversation and fellowship around a shared meal followed by a small group discipleship study.

Data-Analysis Process

The researcher played an active role as a participant who both observed and shared through table-fellowship, offered guidance, and academic and theological instruction. The process of data analysis involved close reading of surveys, evaluations, and weekly self-reflection papers to help identify emergent patterns and track changes. Of particular interest was the presence of "otherness" described earlier as the central aspect of agape and the chief essence of Christ's actions in descent. Every week the girls were tracked for impact from exposure to Christ's values and asked the 2nd Mile Question which specifically was designed to measure self-awareness with respect to otherness. Of interest was the identification and discovery of the factors which most would contribute to the embedding of this value in the lives of the project's participants. The researcher was looking to see what part peer influence may have played, or exposure to and participation in service experiences, class knowledge and teaching, and communal bondedness might have had with respect to inculcating otherness.

Validity

The researcher looked to see if the tested outcomes from the project were true and certain. The validity of a qualitative research project is helped when the research is credible and observable results can be generalized with a measure of integrity to other contexts. Transferability of project outcomes were given consideration after termination of the project. Changes that occurred during project implementation were carefully documented and assessed as to overall impact with respect to alteration in expected outcomes. Timely and well-written documentation of observations as the project

unfolded helped confirm or contradict assumptions that the researcher had outlined ahead of time.

Credibility

Selection of participants was non-random in that participants were female and each had expressed the desire to mature as a Christian disciple. Participants may or may not have had personal contact with the researcher before being chosen to participate in LINK. However, the researcher did not participate in the selection process. This decision was made in order to prevent bias in shaping the project for success along expected outcomes. The application process was open to all interested female students and the Christian Ministries staff selected eight applicants.

Participants were encouraged repeatedly to be true to themselves with regard to any information they were asked to contribute during the various data collection procedures. The researcher was aware and tried to safeguard against students' tendency to answer questions from a perspective of what they thought were the views of their mentor. Thus efforts were made to encourage participants to respond to questions out of an honest evaluation and genuine assessment of themselves.

Transferability

Being aware of inherent assumptions at the start of a project can help safeguard the validity of a project's overall findings. Some of the assumptions the researcher brought to the start of the project included the belief that Western values of independence and individualism hinder a Matthean 16:24 discipleship and that challenging participants

to give sacrificially for the good of others would help undermine the impact that a radical autonomous individualism has on preventing Westerners from embracing a discipleship of descent. The assumption was that a change in time and spending habits would be evidence of the adoption of Jesus' value of voluntary poverty. Growth in simplicity behaviors such as recycling, volunteerism, and financial giving were assumed to be the outward manifestations of the inward reality of simplicity.

The researcher also assumed that strong communal ties were necessary in order to successfully embed a culture with one's values. Strength of community directly influenced the degree to which Jesus' value of voluntary poverty was embraced by participants. The researcher looked to see what factors most successfully bridged the dichotomy between values and the degree of impact those values had on resultant behaviors. The ability to give must be joined to a purpose that is redemptive and impacts others for good if the value of altruism is to be successfully reinforced and adopted as a lifestyle.

Triangulation

Two methods of triangulation were utilized to help ensure project credibility. As a way to triangulate data the same two quantitative surveys, the National Altruism Survey and the Simplicity Scale, were administered to all Christian Ministries students in an Introduction to Christian Ministries class. This helped the researcher determine whether or not the one factor not made available to students outside of LINK, the project emphasis on simplicity, might be the likely variable that would cause any shift in altruism.

The second method of triangulation involved the use of multiple qualitative and quantitative instruments to track changes during the program. These included a National Altruism Survey, a Simplicity Scale, a weekly self-reporting paper with the 2nd Mile Question and Joy Factor Quotient, and researcher observations and documentation through mid-course sampling and interviews. Interpretation and reporting of the data was fairly straightforward with regard to the simplicity and philanthropy surveys. These two tests were designed to show whether or not there were any increases in simplicity behaviors and values. The Philanthropy Test was given both before and after the project to help determine any changes with respect to the detachment that was identified as a characteristic of simplicity. The National Altruism Survey compared LINK participants' empathy and altruistic values and behaviors with national averages extrapolated from a reputable study. The weekly self-reporting was utilized to give regular narrative feedback while the program was in progress. While specific concrete measures were not utilized in the self-reporting, the self-reporting helped gauge the impact LINK activities had during the course of the semester.

Dependability

Initially the researcher was aware that mortality might be an issue. It was expected that students might drop out due to their immaturity to maintain and keep promised commitments within the changing demands that accompany an evolving campus environment. Because of the static nature of a dynamic campus environment, the researcher was ready to interpose any course-change corrections with regard to testing to

better access the information she determined was needed in order to safeguard the project.

This factor of dependability drew special notice however when at the end of the project there was no attrition. The continued commitment of the eight young women to attend and participate in all LINK activities over the course of ten weeks even though they received no monetary or academic compensation was of special notice and it helped spotlight the central discovery among the project's outcomes.

Confirmability

The researcher documented observations with respect to negative or positive experiences by participants in LINK and shared results of the overall program with the LINK participants in an attempt to confirm findings and to learn from the participants what elements of the program most resonated with them in inculcating the values necessary to a discipleship of descent. These findings were utilized to strengthen the program and to plan the fall itinerary of LINK.

Timeline for LINK Experiment

2012
November 7 Advertising for LINK
November 14 Information Session and Application for LINK

2013
February 9 Retreat for LINK Participants
February 17 Distribution of Syllabus; Testing
February 17 – April 28 Ten Communal Meals
February 18 – April 29 Ten Class Sessions
February 11 – April 29 COPE, RROKI, OAM Workshop
May 6 Testing

Survey Instruments

National Altruism Study

In a 2003 report compiled by the Fetzer Institute, a National Altruism Survey (NAS) was conducted to test empathy, altruistic values, and altruistic behaviors.[4] The NAS was administered on a randomly selected half of the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) which had a response rate of 70.1% and 1366 completed cases. One significant finding of the NAS was that both empathy and altruistic values were only moderately indicative of altruistic behaviors even among those who claimed to be religious. This can be interpreted to mean that persons' values and capacity to feel empathy do not necessarily translate into behaviors. This possible extrapolation supports the hypothesis that the Western Church has been adversely affected in its witness because of a weak spirituality that does not translate into visible and tangible lifestyle expressions of simplicity which are reflective of Christ's values in voluntary poverty. Faith without works is dead. The values of altruism should find expression in concrete ways that reveal God to the world. One item the doctoral candidate looked for was to explore whether or not LINK's formational efforts brought about an increase in altruistic behaviors. Administering the NAS survey at the end of the ten-week experience allowed the doctoral candidate to compare the impact of LINK with a reputable study.

[4]Appendix A.

Philanthropy Test and Simplicity Scale

Two other survey instruments were administered both before and after the LINK experiment to gauge any increase/decrease in how participants spent their time and money. One was a Philanthropy Test designed to identify an increase in the willingness of LINK participants to give more of their income to alleviate human need.[5] The other was a Simplicity Scale designed to measure whether or not LINK participants would adopt lifestyle changes as a result of their exposure to the values of Jesus.[6] The doctoral candidate designed this instrument as a result of a study published in 1995 in the Journal of Family and Consumer Science Education.[7] The study found that ethical considerations were more influential in the decision to adopt lifestyle behaviors and practices associated with simplicity than exposure to ecological or economic concerns. Therefore, LINK's emphases on the values of Jesus and his actions in descent guided course topics and discussion.

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[5]Appendix D.

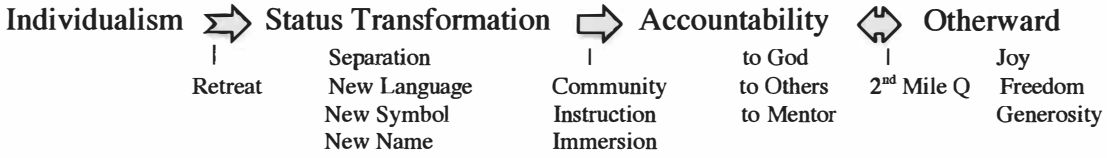
[6]Appendix E.

[7]Teris P. Nolen and Barbara Clauson, "Choosing Voluntary Simplicity as a Lifestyle," *Journal of Family and Consumer Science Education*, vol. 13, no. 2, Fall/Winter, 1995. 62. natefacs.org/JFCSE/v13no2/13-2-62%0Nolen.pdf (accessed November 4, 2012).

Theory Behind the Project Design

Figure 2.

THEORETICAL PROCESS



The theory behind the LINK discipleship project was compiled from several sources. First was an awareness of the change in emphasis from product to process. In commenting upon the theme of the 2012 Clinton Global Initiative, "Designing for Impact", Walmart CEO Mike Duke commented, "I loved this (theme). I really believe that in order to lead we have to be intentional about design on the front end so that we get better outcomes on the back end."[8] Postmodern missional conversations related to discipleship have paralleled this same shift from product to process with a change in focus from outcomes to the processes that better promote genuine spiritual transformation.

Closely allied with the shift toward a greater emphasis on discipleship is the second organizational principle behind the design of the doctoral project model. This second principle involved the need to foster a culture with the tight relational bonds necessary in order to embed a community with Jesus' values. According to Edgar H.

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[8]Mike Duke is President and CEO of Walmart. Comment was posted in a blog by Mike Duke on September 26, 2012.

Schein, the culture of an organization is made up of multiple personal assumptions, behaviors, and practices that guide people's interactions and group dynamics.[9] The power in culture lies in its ability to reinforce and impose its values. The process of culture formation is very similar to that of groups. A group gains its identity through the shared patterns of thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and values which result from shared experiences. Because of this the project model was designed with numerous shared group activities and experiences which purpose was to foster strong relational ties of trust, caring, and commitment.

Rituals and symbols are another way to reinforce and build culture. Discipleship is more than just intellectual assent. It is a total process involving the whole person and all the related senses that human beings utilize to help make meaning. In his book, *Symbols and Ceremony*, Matthew Zahniser makes the point that the dualism inherent in Western spirituality tends to make a separation between God's concern for personal well-being and larger existential concerns related to meaning and eternal destiny. This separation of the sacred from the ordinary has resulted in a bifurcation peculiar to Western Christianity and is not typical of majority world Christians. Majority world Christians do not separate the sacred from the secular. Their spirituality is more integrated and holistic. In a twenty-first century globalized society, Zahniser believes Christian rituals, symbols, and ceremonies should be an integral part of any plan of spiritual formation. They help witness to the outsider, and they help define identity and point to something that is greater than themselves and which gives meaning and purpose.

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[9]Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

Therefore participants in the doctoral project were asked to agree upon a liturgy and rhythm of weekly-shared worship, prayer, and fasting. A symbol created by the author from Celtic art, an emphasis on developing a common language, and the Christian ceremony of the Eucharist were also incorporated with the deliberate intention of reinforcing a distinct identity and culture separate from the rest of the campus community.[10]

A recognition that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent in any work of genuine transformation meant that prayer had to be an integral component in the LINK project from inception to completion. The researcher tried to maintain a sensitivity and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit as she sought for God's grace, strength, and guidance in designing, preparing, and implementing the LINK project and in praying regularly for the LINK participants.

Project Implementation and Summary

LINK was originally designed to be a communal experiment that allowed for theological and vocational exploration in considering the values of Jesus and the responsibility enjoined upon disciples in light of those values. Nine total activities comprised the project. These included a weekend retreat, weekly classroom instruction and small group mentoring, a weekly shared meal, a Shared Rule to order the group's spiritual life, a Community Purse, a Simplicity Challenge, and three planned immersion events.

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[10]See Appendix H.

Because research shows that exposure to a need creates the empathy needed to invoke lifestyle changes, LINK planned three special events designed to sensitize participants to human and environmental need.[11] All three special events were opened to the wider campus community and to the public. These events included a Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) designed and led by Think Tank, Inc., a creation care emphasis with Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky, Inc., (RROKI) and an Older Adult Ministries (OAM) seminar with Richard Gentzler, director for the United Methodist Church's center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries from the General Board of Global Ministries.[12] Only two of the three planned special events were implemented. The OAM workshop was cancelled due to lack of response from area churches.

The LINK project began with an overnight retreat in Louisville to build the relational ties necessary for fostering covenantal community.[13] The researcher's goals for the retreat were to strengthen community ties, build trust, introduce the young women to the scope of LINK, and to assist them in developing a shared rule which would govern times of weekly worship, prayer, and fasting for the rest of the semester. New concepts

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[11]LINK was advertised to the Lindsey Wilson College community as being Personal, Communal, and Missional: Personal through guided reflection, Communal through shared experiences of small group mentoring and activities, and Missional in learning to serve God, Others, and Creation. These three foci were informed by Dr. Elaine Heath's Missional Wisdom Foundation, www.missionalwisdom.com (accessed January 2013).

[12]See Appendix I for pictures taken from COPE and RROKI events.

[13]Arnold van Gennep's work in *The Rites of Passage* (University of Chicago Press, 1960) and Mark McVann's chapter, "Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts" (Jerome H. Nerey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models of Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991)), both cite separation in terms of locale and social behaviors/customs as a necessary prerequisite to adoption of new values and successfully initiating change in behaviors. Status transformation has been shown to take place in three phases. The first is separation from familiar people and places. The second phase is marginalization where initiands are deliberately confused with respect to their previous ways of thinking and relating in terms of identity, customs, and values. The third phase is reintroduction of the initiands into society after first meeting a challenge of some kind that proves the individual's right to be perceived differently.

such as the 2nd Mile Question and Joy Factor Quotient, and new phraseology aimed at fostering a new identity and culture were introduced during the course of the retreat. Seven of the eight LINK applicants participated in the retreat. The eighth student had already discussed her scheduling conflict with the director during the previous semester when initially she had applied to participate in the LINK discipleship program.

The girls met with the project director at her condo in Louisville, Kentucky. The afternoon activities were divided into ice-breakers and small group activities which built trust and encouraged sharing. The second half of the afternoon was a time of teaching on simplicity and on developing a shared rule. The girls were treated to dinner at a Japanese steak house and the evening ended with a liturgy of evening prayer. The girls then had the night to themselves watching movies, talking, and eating. Sunday morning was utilized to teach on godly identity and creating a culture of shared discipleship and growing in holiness. A short service project was planned where the girls labeled chapsticks for H.O.P.E. and discussed the issue of human trafficking.[14] This was followed by a trip to Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky Inc. (RROKI) as part of an introduction to creation care.

After the retreat all seven of the retreat participants rated themselves as having grown stronger bonds of friendship, and six of the seven circled the highest rating for feeling like a valued and participating member of LINK. The researcher feels she reached every goal she had set for the retreat. According to retreat evaluations the greatest take-away for the women was the sense of bondedness they had formed with one another. The women also were introduced to new ways of thinking and speaking about themselves.

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[14]Helping Our Prostituted and Exploited Children, www.rescueandrestoreky.org (accessed January 2013).

The women took ownership for developing a shared rule. They discussed and agreed upon a classic Christian liturgy by downloading a Common Worship and Prayer application.

Although the young women agreed to develop a Shared Rule they did not fully understand the significance of worship as the central priority out of which persons were asked to order their lives. At first they did not quite grasp the significance and meaning of this form of liturgy but honored the request to synchronize their schedules and decide on how often they would meet throughout each week. However, by the end of the project all eight subjects rated the Shared Rule in the top four most impacting of LINK's eight activities on their thinking and behaviors.[15] Even though they had agreed to meet once a week for nine weeks they chose an additional tenth time to meet for worship and prayer. In a mid-semester one-on-one interview with each of the eight participants all commented that the Shared Rule proved to be a time of refreshing and an opportunity to connect to God and to each other. All eight women came from free church backgrounds and therefore the concepts associated with classic Christian liturgy and Benedictine rhythms for prayer initially were foreign to the young women.

Over the course of the project the women met with the LINK director for a total of eighteen hours of classroom instruction and small group mentoring. The times of teaching and mentoring were rated as another component that appeared in the top four most impacting activities.[16] Class lectures centered on the value of voluntary poverty and the discipline of simplicity and were based upon material taken from the dissertation's

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[15]Appendix J.

[16]Appendix J.

biblical, historical, theological and theoretical foundations. The girls also were introduced to the movement known as the New Monasticism.

At the end of the semester the women were asked to rate in numerical order the eight LINK activities according to the greatest impact on their thinking and behaviors.[17] Out of eight total activities the top four most impacting were the Shared Rule, the times of classroom teaching and small group mentoring with the LINK director, the Retreat, and COPE (Cost of Poverty Experience). The least rated activities in terms of their impact on the young women's thinking and behaviors were the weekly shared meal, the Community Purse, the Simplicity Challenge, and RROKI (Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky Inc.). The researcher believes that one of the factors contributing to the lesser impact of these activities on the project's participants is that the women had less ownership and responsibility in terms of planning and participation. Conversely, the top four most impacting activities demanded more time and involvement.

Cost of Poverty Experience

The Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) is a three-hour poverty simulation experience created by Think Tank, Inc., out of Dayton, Ohio. The purpose of COPE is to allow people to experience the challenges and hardships faced by low-income families. Karen VanZant, CEO of the National Circles Campaign and co-founder of Think Tank, said that the creation of social capital is the solution to poverty.[18] Thus the strengths of compassion and caring allied with educational, religious, and political community resources provide a very real hope for holistic transformation. LINK tried to help students

[17]Appendix J.

[18]http://thinktank-inc.org/gpage1.html (accessed October 2012).

live the very values they studied as they were given an opportunity through COPE to practice current aspects in sociological and missional conversations related to genuine renewal and revitalization.

Eighty-two people made up of Lindsey students and faculty participated in COPE.[19] The doctoral candidate organized the event and recruited participants from the campus and community. Two VISTA volunteers from Think Tank acted as facilitators. Roles were assigned by the doctoral candidate that were based on real-life people who have participated in Think Tank's Circles programs. Roles such as pawnshop owners, bankers, social services, day-care operators, convenience store cashiers, parole-officers, and faith-based organizations were some of occupations represented in the poverty-immersion experience. The rest of the participants acted out scripted challenges faced by real-life families, single parents, and homeless individuals.

Results from sixty surveys taken immediately after the COPE simulation are tabulated below:

Table 1.

COPE SURVEY TABULATIONS

SURVEY QUESTION	RESPONSE
What level of impact did the simulation experience have for you?	60% Significant Impact
Greater understanding for the barriers that exist for low-income families	93.3%
Greater understanding of how community resource/business interacts with families in poverty	88.3%
Thinking about the causes of poverty changed as a result of the COPE simulation	73.7%
Behavior changed as a result of COPE simulation	72.4%

[19]See pictures in Appendix I.

Out of sixty responses, forty-three chose in addition to answer questions related to *how* their thinking had changed and thirty-eight chose to answer *how* their behavior had changed as a result of going through COPE. Two-thirds of these respondents cited a marked growth in empathy and one-third claimed increased behavioral changes such as increased volunteerism, financial giving, and social activism.[20]

The Cost of Poverty Experience made a significant difference in the ability of the LINK participants to feel empathy for people they perceived were less fortunate themselves. Prior to COPE the LINK girls' weighted average as measured by the National Altruism Study for having tender feelings of compassion toward persons less fortunate was 4.38. After the COPE simulation the weighted average for that question went up to 5.00.[21] Six of the eight girls rated COPE in the top four most-impacting LINK planned activities on their thinking and behaviors.

The impact of COPE served to reinforce the claim that exposure to human need creates the empathy and impetus needed for lifestyle change and social justice. COPE survey responses affirmed the value of immersive experiences. Short-term missions or urban mission projects are effective in helping people better identify with human need and they help create impetus for action. Thus they are effective in helping translate values into behaviors.

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[20]Appendix K.

[21]Appendix C.

Simplicity Scale

The Simplicity Scale was administered both before the start and after the termination of the project. Recycling behaviors increased in every area except for the recycling of glass.[22] Time, money, and convenience all played into the girls' efforts to recycle. The researcher noted that those girls she perceived to be more spiritually mature increased the most in their recycling behaviors because they were willing to make greater sacrifices with respect to convenience and comfort. Due to financial restrictions the girls rarely practiced conscientious consumerism. Comfort also was a factor in the girls' willingness to raise or lower the thermostat.

In a study done on choosing voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle and the role of group support, researchers found that ethical considerations were more influential in adopting simplicity behaviors than exposure to ecological concerns. However, exposure to ecological concerns helped define the scope of the problem and the practices associated with it, "Ethical issues more than ecological or economic considerations influenced respondents choices toward a simpler lifestyle."[23] The researcher found that the LINK study corroborated these findings. Ecological concerns and the simplicity behaviors associated with them are not as important to Millennials as previous generations, "Three times more Millennials than Boomers at the same age said they did not make any personal effort to help save the environment."[24] The girls who were more

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[22]Appendix F.

[23]Teris P. Nolen and Barbara Clauson, "Choosing Voluntary Simplicity as a Lifestyle", *Journal of Family and Consumer Science Education*, vol.13, no. 2, Fall/Winter, 1995, 73.

[24]Statistic taken from *AARP The Magazine*, September 2013, 10.

intent on conformity to Christ and his teachings were the ones who made the most significant increases in simplicity behaviors related to recycling and energy conservation.

Simplicity Challenge and Common Purse

In the Simplicity Challenge the girls each were given $12 and challenged to buy as much of an entire outfit as they could within that budget. The next week the girls modeled their bargain-savvy finds. All the girls except one participated in this challenge. The one who did not apologized later and admitted she felt uncomfortable shopping at thrift stores and wearing another person's used clothing. The researcher feels the Simplicity Challenge was not as successful because she did not have the proper amount of time to ground its ethical content in biblical teaching.

The Common Purse however was much more profitable in terms of teaching the girls to sow liberally and give generously and to steward their monies toward micro-financing opportunities. During the last month of the project the girls were asked to contribute on a weekly basis toward a common purse that was to be used for meeting human need. The first time the LINK director taught on excess wealth and the obligation enjoined upon Christians in utilizing it to help others obtain the basic necessities of life she felt she was met with resistance. However, with further teaching and giving the group control as to the distribution of the monies the girls came to experience the blessedness attendant with generosity. When the girls were asked hypothetically to continue giving to the Common Purse for another three months all eight pledged to continue giving and three of the girls chose to increase the monetary amounts of their contributions.

One particular story is worthy of note. One of the young women, Emily, whom the director identified as having caught the vision of Jesus' value of voluntary poverty and how it informs a discipleship of descent told of a challenge she had faced in practicing self-denial and sacrifice as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Christ promises one will gain one's life back again if one chooses to lay it aside for a redemptive good. This particular young woman already had contributed to the Common Purse and had little to live on for the rest of the week. However, an opportunity to give five of her six dollars to a homeless veteran presented itself and she gave it with the idea in mind, "If I give him the $5 dollar bill the Lord will provide." That evening at a dinner she was attending the speaker randomly called her out of the audience and gave her a $100 bill. Emily recalls:

> I immediately thought of the Lord's promise that He will provide for us. Phil 4:19 I felt as if the message of this story was for me to remember each day that He is more than able to take care of me so it is my duty to care for others.

Emily's story testifies to the goodness of God in a remarkable way. The overall testimony of scripture encourages us to trust in God no matter the nature of attendant circumstances. Life does not always work out so neatly. Nevertheless, Christians are exhorted to live a life of faith that relies and trusts in God's provision even in the midst of besieging circumstances. We are enjoined to lose our lives for the cause of Christ. Mt 16:25 In losing our life in this way we have Jesus' word that in reality we will somehow find it. Emily's story is a testimony to her growing faith to turn to God in trustful reliance as she becomes more other-ward in her focus.

The 2nd Mile Question and Weekly Self-Reporting

One detail Emily does not mention in her testimony above is that she recalled "the 2nd Mile" in making her decision to part with the five dollars. She chose to make a sacrifice because Christ asks we exercise a love that displaces the self-life with its respective interests for the good of others. Six-dollars was the amount Emily had left to get by on for the week. These details were mentioned in an interview with the LINK program director mid-way through the project. The 2nd Mile Question was designed to help the LINK participants grow in "otherness", identified earlier as the central aspect of *agape* love. *Agape* love is other-ward in its direction because it seeks the wellbeing of another often at the cost of one's own. As Christ becomes more and more the fixed absolute from which all ethical decision-making is made, the self increasingly is moved toward the margins in its focus on others. This movement of becoming other-ward is a work of the Holy Spirit's transforming power to form within us Christ's own value of voluntary poverty.

The Weekly Self-Reporting Form asked the girls what aspects of the class lecture material they thought were most important and how that affected their behavior.[25] First they were asked to identify the topic taught during class time. Second, they were asked to describe what they thought was most important about the topic or thought. The intent of the second question was to help spotlight their values. Third, they were then asked how what they considered important affected their behavior. The intent of this third question was to ascertain the factors that help translate values into behaviors.

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[25]See Appendix G.

The Weekly Self-Reporting Form also asked the 2nd Mile Question: "Did anyone ask something of you this week, and you gave that and more? Explain." This was followed by a JOY factor rating scale, "On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your JOY Factor Quotient in light of the above 2nd Mile incident." Mid-way through the semester the JOY Factor Quotient was changed to, "On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how you *initially* felt in light of the above 2nd mile incident." This was because the girls were rating how they felt after having sacrificed in some way and this was not an adequate indicator of the process of growth in otherness that the JOY Factor Quotient was trying to measure. Asking how the girls felt before rather than after being asked to go the second mile, however, gave some indication of the spiritual maturation and growth of the girls in initially responding to requests that were inconvenient and time-consuming and which interrupted their own agendas with a demand to sacrifice in some way.

The researcher noticed that the girls' anticipation of knowing they would be asked the 2nd Mile Question was instrumental in increasing the girls' awareness for opportunities to practice self-denial and service. It also helped make the girls more aware of their inward motivations with regard to their actions and behaviors and contributed to the overall accountability they felt toward their program director.

Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky Inc.

As part of simplicity's emphasis on living responsibly in light of known environmental need a creation care event was planned on the campus with Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky (RROKI). Raptor Rehabilitation came with several of their birds of prey and set up in the large atrium of the campus dining hall where hundreds of

persons passed by on their way in and out of the dining center. Students, faculty, and staff had an opportunity to learn about birds of prey and ecological concerns related to their wellbeing.[26] Three of the girls rated RROKI in their top four most impacting activities.

Weekly Shared Meal and Small Group Mentoring

Each Sunday the girls met with the LINK director at the campus dining hall where they ate and reconnected over dinner for thirty to forty minutes before leaving for a time of small group mentoring. The dining hall was crowded and noisy. One of the girls often came to join us having already eaten since she was not on the dining plan. Only one girl rated the weekly shared meal in the top four of the most impacting activities. The director feels that if the girls had been able to plan the meal, shop for the groceries, and make the meal together they would have enjoyed this activity so much more and it would have served its purpose in helping the young women reconnect and bond in the midst of their busy schedules.

After eating the girls would meet with their director for a time of discipleship and relational caring. The main purpose of the small group mentoring was to make the director's life accessible to the girls, strengthen community, and to listen to the girls and be able to speak into their lives. This more relaxed format was informed by current conversations in missiology that prioritize shared life practices over planned activities or programs.

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[26]See pictures in Appendix I.

Spring 2013 LINK Activities Rating

According to self-narratives from the subjects with regard to the impact of LINK on their thinking and behavior, the researcher can say definitively that LINK made an impact on all eight subjects with regard to an increased awareness to live more simply and steward their time and resources more responsibly in light of known human and environmental need. All eight subjects became more empathic toward people in poverty, and all eight subjects grew in their concern and knowledge of environmental issues.[27] They began recycling and practiced greater energy conservation.[28] They also all chose to continue participating in the Common Purse and three chose to increase their contributions. The comments below were made at the end of the project in response to the question on the Spring 2013 LINK Activities Rating form:

> Q "Has your thinking and/or behavior changed as a result of participation in the LINK experience? If so, please describe."
>
> Absolutely! I have grown to be more aware of environmental issues and also what it looks like to be in community with others the way we have talked about all semester. ~ Samantha D.
>
> I say yes it has. Mainly, the going the extra mile has really pushed me to give to others and try not to worry about myself. I am to be a servant and to serve others. ~ DeResha W.
>
> Yes. I am now more aware of others and the needs around me each day. For example, I am using a re-fillable water bottle more and less disposable eating tools (utensils and bowls, etc.). I also value the relationships I have with the girls on this campus more after hearing some of the life stories of the girls in LINK. ~ Emily R.

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[27]See Appendices B and C, question number one, "1. Empathy: I often have tender concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me." On this first question all eight subjects scored themselves at the highest level, "Describes me very well." However, when the first seven questions in the empathy category were weighted as a whole per individual, one subject showed a slight decrease overall in feelings of empathy and seven showed an increase in their feelings of empathy.

[28]See Appendix F.

> Yes, I believe it has helped me open my eyes more. I was raised knowing we should be kind to others but getting to experience it with a group of girls has helped me see how blessed I truly am. I have been able to grow in community with others and learn more about what Christ would do and want me to do. ~ Ashli D.

> I have a broader view on what those of lower income have to endure. In addition, I have found that I have a greater concern for these individuals. Also, I have begun to think more about how my blessings (time and money in particular) can be spent to help others in the most effective manner. ~ Bailey S.

> Yes, the Second Mile Question has caused me to rethink divine appointments that I have missed. I feel that I am more aware of these opportunities now. Also, the Simplicity Challenge really forced me to manage my money and realize I can get nice things for a cheaper price then give the rest of the money (away).
> ~ Caitlyn H.

> I think I have felt more at peace in my relationships with God. I have become more open-minded about different ways to worship and serve. ~ Caitlin U.

> I would say LINK has made me more aware of areas in my life that I am doing well and where I could improve. It really helped me connect better with girls. ~ Breanna C.

Although all eight participants were impacted in their awareness, it is the researcher's observation that not all evidenced change in lifestyle behaviors with regard to otherness. Behavioral change takes time. It is hoped that the value of voluntary poverty as lived by Christ will continue to inform the subjects' ethical decision making and there will be an increasing alignment of altruistic behaviors with beliefs as the women mature. Assessment of the data suggests that the role of group support was a significant factor in influencing behavior during the experiment. As the women go their different ways a follow up inquiry in the following months will be helpful in determining the degree of impact LINK had upon the women's lives in terms of simplicity, altruistic service, and otherness.

Emergent Themes

During the course of the project certain themes began to emerge. First was the value the subjects placed upon their relationships. The desire for belongingness in an authentic community characterized by genuine caring and a shared faith is significant among this age demographic. The researcher was surprised that not one young woman dropped out of the program. The researcher entered the project expecting some attrition because of the immaturity of emerging adults and the stresses associated with college life.

High expectations and high challenge were other factors that needed to be considered in interpreting the data. The young women had very high expectations of themselves and of their project leader. Phrases such as, "young women who are strong and holy," or, "noble young women of excellence" played into group pressure and reinforced expectations regarding commitment and performance. This sense of high expectation also impacts subjects' choice of avocation. In a 2013 NetVUE symposium on undergraduate vocation, one university found that as students were exposed to global issues related to human and environmental need the students' interest in occupation and income went down and their interest in avocation went up. Students who are exposed through immersive experiences, such as studying abroad or volunteering regularly, begin to reprioritize their desires and begin to set goals in order to make a real difference with their lives.

The researcher's role was to lay a clear theological rationale for asking the subjects to embrace a discipleship of descent in solidarity with Jesus' own value of voluntary poverty. The women were asked repeatedly if someone had asked something of them and whether or not they given that and more, and then they were asked to rate how

they felt with regard to their actions. The repeated focus on sacrificial service and motive had the effect of helping the women come to know themselves better. The researcher feels that the subjects' responses show a greater self-awareness as the project progressed.

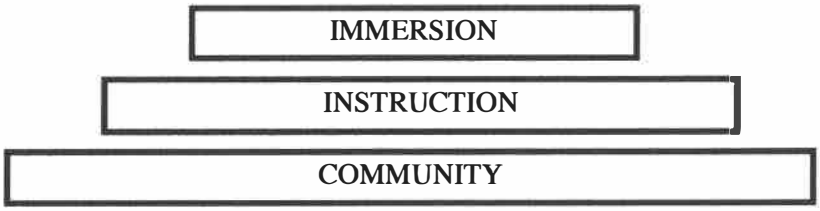
One aspect of the project that had to be tweaked early in the semester was the plan for helping the girls become more missional. Not having an established residence where the girls could live and share life together and practice hospitality presented a challenge to cultivating a community that reflected some of the marks of the New Monasticism. The researcher found instead that the young women were already involved in all kinds of service to their campus community and that asking them to develop a new missional emphasis that would be local and incarnational would be redundant. The researcher realized she could still achieve the goals for her project by encouraging her subjects to serve in the areas where they were already involved.

A house was offered to LINK for the fall 2013 semester. However, after learning about some of the college's rules with regard to residential living and seeing the conditions in which the girls would have to live, the LINK program director decided to explore other solutions for developing a New Monastic style community for undergraduate students. The Christian Ministries department staff has been supportive of the LINK initiative and one outcome has been a decision to begin meeting regularly as a small group. This decision is due in part to the staff's involvement with 3dM and the desire to build a greater discipling culture on the campus. The staff also has committed to observing a Shared Rule around which to order their worship together.

Summary of Learnings

Figure 3.

THREE CENTRAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP



The desire for community and the emphasis Millennials place upon their relationships, the need for intensive biblical teaching, and exposure to human and environmental need through immersive experiences were central to inculcating the values and behaviors identified as integral to a discipleship of descent. These themes of community, instruction, and immersion were the three most prominent threads that emerged throughout the study. The tendency of Millennials' relationships and Christian orthodoxy to be shallow and their desire to make a significant difference with their lives contributed toward their willingness to embrace a high invitation/high challenge model of discipleship.

In a 2003 Christianity Today interview with Tom Albin, dean of The Upper Room in Nashville, Albin comments, "I now understand Christian spiritual formation and discipleship to involve three interrelated dimensions: knowledge, experience, and a small group that can support me as I grow in grace and discover my place in the body of Christ."[29] Community, instruction, and immersion each must be present in some measure

[29]Tim Stafford, "Finding God in Small Groups: Tom Albin's doctoral research reveals why the Wesleys' system worked so well", *Christianity Today*, August 2003, 44.

for discipleship to succeed. The eight young women who participated in the 2013 launch of LINK confirmed the value and centrality of community, instruction, and immersion through their self-narratives, interviews, and data collection surveys.

At the beginning of the project it was stated that values do not necessarily align with behaviors. People can consider something to be valuable yet not change the way they live in response to what they have agreed is important. Throughout the project the researcher was looking for factors instrumental in shifting values into behaviors. The National Altruism Study found that persons' values and the capacity to feel empathy do not necessarily mean people will take steps to incorporate changes into their lifestyles and habits which more faithfully live out affirmed values. This is reflective of Western Christian spirituality. It has been part of the thesis of this dissertation that the Western Church has been adversely affected in its witness because of a weak spirituality that does not translate into visible and tangible expressions of simplicity which reflect Christ's values in voluntary poverty. Christ's kenotic value of voluntary poverty should find expression in concrete ways through the Church so as to reveal God to the world.

Throughout the project's implementation one factor quickly became of special note. The LINK program director was surprised that there was almost perfect attendance at every LINK activity and no attrition among the eight students. This was especially notable considering the immaturity of emerging adults and their tendency to overcommit and become overwhelmed in a competing campus environment. What exactly was the key factor within supportive community or exposure to Jesus' values through teaching or to human and environmental need that caused the girls to adopt simplicity behaviors?

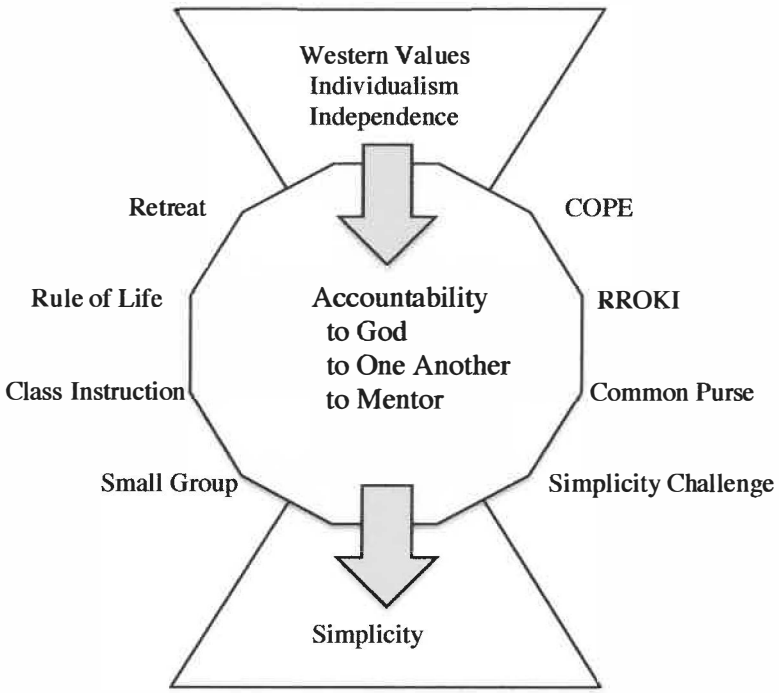
In repeatedly reviewing the data the researcher came across these words from an interview with one of the girls, "Just meeting with people regularly and having a group to come back to." This was said mid-way through the project in response to being asked what the most significant impact had been thus far. "Being involved in a community of girls and meeting each week with people in the form of discipleship," was the most significantly impacting aspect of LINK. The researcher realized that accountability had been the central factor that had helped the girls shift values into behaviors.

Accountability

From the very beginning to the end of the LINK project the girls had entered into accountability with each other, with the LINK director, and with God. Accountability was instrumental for the girls' adoption of simplicity behaviors in accordance with exposure to Jesus' value of voluntary poverty. Accountability was the primary agent for change. The *American Dictionary* defines accountability as the requirement to, "justify one's decisions or actions." When people are placed in a position of accountability they must be able to give an answer to a person or persons for their actions. People in accountability are more likely to follow through when they know they will be called upon to explain or justify their behaviors. The eight young women of LINK had been put into a position where they were answerable to one another, to the LINK director, and personally to God for responding appropriately in response to their newfound knowledge of Jesus' value of voluntary poverty and its implications for discipleship. Accountability was the key discovery for the researcher in the project model known as LINK.

Figure 4.

LINK DISCIPLESHIP MODEL
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY



Accountability is the key to making disciples who embrace a lifestyle of altruistic service and simplicity in solidarity with Christ and to calling the Western Church to live responsibly in light of known human and environmental need. Homer Ashby defines accountability as:

> The ethical power source that helps ensure that relationships maintain their continuity and viability. Accountability is the fuel that drives persons to 'want to do the right thing', to do the necessary things in order to stay connected. Accountability spurs persons to acknowledge when they are not doing their part and to commit to do differently.[30]

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[30]Homer U. Ashby, Jr., "Accountability," *McCormick Theological Seminary Journal of Pastoral Theology*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2004, 118.

Accountability is the loom that makes the fabric of community and connectedness meaningful and rich. It is the process or "weave" that enjoins right action upon the part of persons to one another. It is the glue that deepens relationships and strengthens bonds of genuine caring and commitment.

Accountability in discipleship is not a new concept. Methodism was built upon accountability and always has valued its role highly in spiritual formation. In an article on the centrality of accountability to a Wesleyan discipling ethic, Kevin Watson argues that the discipline integral to Wesley's bands, classes, and societies was a key element for the growth and vitality of the early Methodist movement, "A key aspect of making disciples of Jesus Christ involves engagement with and accountability to other disciples."[31] Watson says accountability is crucial to the renewal of the United Methodist Church, "If contemporary Methodism is to reclaim its Wesleyan heritage it will need to recommit itself to a discipline that involves small group accountability as a primary means of making disciples of Jesus Christ."[32]

Wesley's intent for his societies, classes, and bands was that the people called Methodist would learn to, "watch over one another in love." Love should be the primary motive for accountability, "The disciplinary function of the class meeting, so valued by Wesley, naturally included determining whether the Methodists were walking according to the grace of God."[33] Accountability ensures that God's grace toward us will not prove

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[31]Kevin M. Watson, "The Form and Power of Godliness: Wesleyan Communal Discipline as Voluntary Suffering, *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 43, no. 1, Spring 2008, 179.

[32]Ibid., 165-183.

[33]Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 122.

to be in vain. 1 Cor 15:10 The ethically correct answer in response to Cain's sarcastic question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is "yes." Love ensures that the hard questions will be asked in the right way at the right time and in the right spirit. The writer of Hebrews exhorts, "Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow." Heb 13:17

In an October 2012 interview with missiologist and apostle to the poor Viv Grigg, Grigg spoke to the writer concerning the inability of Westerners to form the relational ties needful for authentic apostolic community characterized by sharing, "In the West communities tend to form and then fall apart very quickly. I do not know why that is, really." This was said in the context of a discussion on why more American Protestants had not answered Christ's call to emulate his values in observing voluntary simplicity by living and ministering among the poor.

According to the findings of LINK the reason why genuine community seems to be more transient among Westerners might be due to a lack of accountability. Self-referential values of individualism and independence are prohibitive to entering into relationships where members are called to answer for their choices and actions. Barna Group's research affirms the critical role accountability plays in the Church's work of transformation:

> Because the underlying theme of the Christian life is one of being transformed from a selfish and self-driven individual to one who lives for and surrenders control of one's life to God, the practice of accountability for life choices and behavior is central to that process of transformation. Yet, a national survey by the Barna Group among people who describe themselves as Christian and involved in a church discovered that only 5% indicated that their

> church does anything to hold them accountable for integrating biblical beliefs and principles into their life.[34]

A lack of accountability may be the primary reason for membership attrition in the United Methodist Church. The Kentucky Annual Conference (KAC) cited a seven percent decline in membership between 1998 and 2008. The four-fold foci of the 2008 General Conference included an emphasis on developing new leaders and making room for new members in order to address church membership attrition worldwide. The findings from LINK indicate that accountability should be a primary consideration in any efforts to revitalize existing congregations.

In his essay, "The Form and Power of Godliness: Wesleyan Communal Discipline as Voluntary Suffering," Kevin Watson states that Wesley's overriding concern was that without accountability Methodists would fall back under the power of the world and be pulled back into worldliness, "Every week Methodists were required to give an account of their loyalties – had they denied themselves, following the Way of Salvation, or had they chosen to be comfortable, following the way of the world?"[35] Wesley had attributed the waning vitality of the Methodist movement to a growing middle class affluence that induced a soft Christianity incapable of self-denial. Watson claims similarly, "Just as Methodists in Wesley's day began to pursue comfortable living through riches, American Methodists are similarly tempted to value comfort above anything else."[36] According to Watson, the decline in the UMC over the past forty years has been in proportion to the

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[34]"The Extent of Accountability," https://www.barna.org/congregations-articles/454-study-describes-christian-accountability-provided-by-churches (accessed August 30, 2013).

[35]Watson, "The Form and Power of Godliness", 174.

[36]Ibid., 179.

accommodation of the dominant culture, "As a result, self-denial is a virtue which has too often been ignored or forgotten in contemporary Methodism."[37] Watson's essay calls for an accountability among Christians in the practice of self-denial as a corrective to the temptations of worldliness.

Conclusion

It has been the writer's thesis that the Church needs to return to a discipleship of descent informed by Jesus' value of voluntary poverty if it is to reclaim its prophetic voice and confront Western materialism with the reality of poverty and global issues related to sustainability. In accommodating to the self-interest bred by modern concepts of privatization and property ownership, the Western Church is failing in its mission to form young disciples who embrace Christ's call to simplicity. Furthermore, the self-referential values of individualism and autonomy prohibit the formation of contexts that foster the covenantal ties needful to embed a culture with the values of Jesus Christ. It was found through the discipling model known as LINK that accountability was the central key to the formation of disciples who embrace Christ's call to a discipleship of descent. The formation of disciples who exemplify a Matthean 16:24 caliber of discipleship must enjoin accountability within a communal small group characterized by mentoring and mission.

Central to Christian discipleship is the theme of descent. The movement in descent first is downward in a sense of having to break or loose and then upward in order to be filled or rebuilt. In descent there first is a process of deconstruction. In order for a

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[37]Watson, "The Form and Power of Godliness," 180.

grain of wheat to become transformed and fruitful it first must undergo decomposition. It first must die. Jn 12:24

Descent is about dying to the self-life in order to make room for God. In Christian spiritual formation it is necessary to become poor in spirit if one is to inherit the kingdom. Self-sufficiency is broken when one acknowledges one's utter spiritual bankruptcy and need for God. The self moves to the margins in order to make room for God and his Trinitarian pattern of outreaching love. In this process of descent, of losing one's life for Christ's sake, Jesus promised we would indeed find it. Mt 16:25 The promise of a discipleship characterized by descent is to become fully human.

This pattern of descent, where God is at the center and the self rightly juxtaposed to God from the margins, is exactly the pattern in Jesus own life. Jesus impoverished himself by forsaking the glory he had with the Father in order to move to the margins. He descended from heaven to earth where he became fully human. The themes of descent in Christ's incarnation, life, and death become the moral basis for his call to a Matthean 16:24 discipleship characterized by self-denial, service, and obedience.

At the beginning the writer found through the process of spiritual autobiography that God had been preparing her for a ministry of teaching and spiritual formation. As an ordained Deacon in full connection in the United Methodist Church who has been appointed to teach on a college campus, the writer decided emerging adults would be an ideal focus for a project on discipleship. A group of eight young women served as the focus group for the project model known as LINK, *Living Incarnationally and Networking for the Kingdom*. The purpose of LINK was to link emerging adults to lifestyles of simplicity and altruism in solidarity with Christ.

An interest in the three great Evangelical Counsels as informed by an Eastern spirituality of the desert led the writer to investigate the role of voluntary poverty in Jesus' life and ministry, in scripture, and in history and theology. It was found that the claims of Christ upon his followers are exclusive and demand a total renunciation of all that is worldly. This renunciation was defined as detachment, the inward reality of simplicity as characterized by joy, freedom, and generosity, with respect to the world and its goods. As disciples who are being formed into Christ's image and who reflect his kenotic value of voluntary poverty, Christ-followers will become more other-ward in their practices and life-orientation in imitation of their Heavenly Father who is *agape* love.

The movements known as the New Monasticism and The Order of Mission exemplify many of the processes and themes identified in this dissertation as needful for the formation of disciples who embrace simplicity in solidarity with Jesus' value of voluntary poverty. The accountability required to live in covenant community is central to the formation of genuine disciples who live responsibly in light of known human and environmental need. The central discovery of the project LINK supports current conversations in Church renewal that recognize the need to return to more organic forms of discipling where relationships can be nurtured in an atmosphere of genuine love and accountability with sound teaching.

Over and over the scriptures call Christian disciples to shun the things of the world in order to witness to a higher reality that reflects the Father. The Church exists to point others to the true reality of God as revealed and proclaimed through Jesus of Nazareth who sets himself as the pattern for all humankind to follow. Toward this end

disciples deny themselves and take up their crosses in order to follow Him. In losing their lives in this way they really find them. The call to embrace a discipleship characterized by descent holds potential for revitalizing a weak Western Christian spirituality while connecting to the longing for God in every human being, "Deep calls unto deep at the thunder of Thy cataracts." Ps 42:7 The ethos of the three great Evangelical Counsels as lived through simplicity holds potential to revitalize the Church.

Over the course of the past two years themes related to voluntary poverty have been studied in scripture, history, and theology. Greater insight has been gained into the values of Jesus, his actions in descent, and his demands for discipleship. It is hoped that this dissertation will be one step toward helping others mature in their understanding and practice of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, 2003
Administered on a random half of the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS)
with a response rate of 70.1% and 1366 completed cases.

Questions and Wordings
1. Empathy

The following statements ask about your thoughts and feeling in various situations. For each item indicate how well it describes you by choosing the number on the showcard where 1 indicates that it does not describe you very well and 5 means that it does describe you very well. Of course numbers 2-4 indicate that how well it describes you are in between these points.

a. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
b. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.
c. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
d. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
e. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
f. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
g. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

2. Acceptance and Selflessness

The following are things that you may experience in your daily life. Please tell me how often these occur.

CARD: Many times a day/Every day/Most days/Some days/Once in a while/Never or Almost Never

a. I feel a selfless caring for others.
b. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.

3. Altruistic Values

Please tell me whether or not you Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, or Strongly disagree with the following statements:

a. People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.
b. Those in need have to learn to take care of themselves and not depend on others.
c. Personally assisting people in trouble is very important for me.
d. These days people need to look after themselves and not overly worry about others.

Appendix A (continued)

4. Altruistic Behaviors

During the past 12 months, how often have you done each of the following things:

CARD: More than once a week/Once a week/Once a month/At least 2 or 3 times in the past year/Once in the past year

a. Donated blood
b. Given food or money to a homeless
c. Returned money to a cashier after
d. Allowed a stranger to go ahead of
e. Done volunteer work for a charity
f. Given money to a charity
g. Offered your seat on a bus or in a public place to a stranger who was standing
h. Looked after a person's plants, mail, or pets while they were away
i. Carried a stranger's belonging, like groceries, a suitcase or shopping bag
j. Given directions to a stranger
k. Let someone you didn't know well borrow an item of some value like dishes or tools

During the past 12 months, how often have you done any of the following things for people you know personally, such as relatives, friends, neighbors, or other acquaintances?

SAQ: More than once a week/Once a week/Once a month/At least 2 or 3 times in the past year/Once in the past year/Not at all in the past year

a. Helped someone outside your household with housework or shopping
b. Lent quite a bit of money to another person
c. Spent time talking with someone who was a bit down or depressed
d. Helped somebody to find a job

APPENDIX B

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY TABLE SUMMARY

LINK 2013 FEBRUARY THROUGH MAY

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY TABLE SUMMARY
LINK 2013 FEBRUARY THROUGH MAY

Categories	Out of Eight (8) Participants Increase/Decrease
• Empathy	6 increased 1 no increase or decrease 1 decreased
• Acceptance and Selflessness	7 increased 1 decreased
• Altruistic Values	4 increased 4 decreased
• Altruistic Behaviors: In General	6 increased 1 no increase or decrease 1 decreased
• Altruistic Behaviors: Among People You Know	4 increased 2 no increase or decrease 2 decreased

APPENDIX C

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY BEFORE/AFTER TABULATIONS

NATIONAL ALTRUISM SURVEY BEFORE/AFTER TABULATIONS

1. Empathy: I often have tender concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

	1 Does not describe me very well	2	3	4	5 Describes me very well	Total Responses	Average Rating
LINK Feb2013				62.50% 5	37.50% 3	8	4.38
LINK May2013					100% 8	8	5.00

2. Empathy: Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.

LINK Feb2013	37.50% 3	50% 4	12.50% 1			8	1.75
LINK May2013	62.50% 5	25% 2		12.50% 1		8	1.63

3. Empathy: When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.

LINK Feb2013			25% 2	25% 2	50% 4	8	4.25
LINK May2013				62.50% 5	37.50% 3	8	4.38

4. Empathy: Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.

LINK Feb2013	37.50% 3	50% 4	12.50% 1			8	1.75
LINK May2013	62.50% 5	25% 2	12.50% 1			8	1.50

5. Empathy: When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.

LINK Feb2013	62.50% 5	25% 2	12.50% 1			8	1.50
LINK May2013	50% 4	37.50% 3	12.50% 1			8	1.63

6. Empathy: I am often quite touched by things I see happen.

LINK Feb2013			25% 2	25% 2	50% 4	8	4.25
LINK May2013			12.50% 1	37.50% 3	50% 4	8	4.38

7. Empathy: I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

LINK Feb2013			12.50% 1	50% 4	37.50% 3	8	4.25
LINK May2013				37.50% 3	62.50% 5	8	4.63

8. Acceptance and Selflessness: I feel a selfless caring for others.

	Many times a day	Every day	Most days	Some days	Once in a while	Never or almost never	Total Responses	Average Rating
LINK Feb2013	25% 2	37.50% 3	37.50% 3				8	2.13
LINK May2013	50% 4	50% 4					8	5.50

9. Acceptance and Selflessness: I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.

LINK Feb2013		37.50% 3	50% 4		12.50% 1		8	2.88
LINK Feb2013	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	12.50% 1			8	4.75

Q13 Altruistic Values: People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Total
LINK Feb2013	100% 8					8
LINK May2013	87.50% 7	12.50% 1				8

Q14 Altruistic Values: Those in need have to learn to take care of themselves and not depend on others.

LINK Feb 2013			62.50% 5	25% 2	12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013		12.50% 1	25% 2	62.50% 5		8

Q15 Altruistic Values: Personally assisting people in trouble is very important for me.

LINK Feb2013	50% 4	50% 4				8
LINK May2013	62.50% 5	25% 2	12.50% 1			8

Q16 Altruistic Values: These days people need to look after themselves and not overly worry about others.

LINK Feb2013			12.50% 1	50% 4	37.50% 3	8
LINK May2013				37.50% 3	62.50% 5	8

Q17 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the last 12 months, how often have you donated blood?

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
LINK Feb2013				12.50% 1	50% 4	37.50% 3	8
LINK May2013				37.50% 3	25% 2	37.50% 3	8

Q18 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you give food or money to the homeless?

LINK Feb2013				37.50% 3	50% 4	12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013				62.50% 5	25% 2	12.50% 1	8

Q19 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you returned money to a cashier after?

LINK Feb2013				37.50% 3	50% 4	12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013			12.50% 1	25% 2	50% 4	12.50% 1	8

Q20 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you allowed a stranger to go ahead of?

LINK Feb2013	25% 2	12.50% 1	25% 2	25% 2		12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013	12.50% 1	25% 2	12.50% 1	50% 4			8

Q21 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you done volunteer work for a charity?

LINK Feb2013	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	50% 4	12.50% 1		8
LINK May2013	25% 2		12.50% 1	37.50% 3	25% 2		8

Q22 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you given money to a charity?

LINK Feb2013				37.50% 3	50% 4	12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013			25% 2	37.50% 3	37.50% 3		8

Q23 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you offered your seat on a bus or in a public place to a stranger who was standing?

LINK Feb2013			12.50% 1	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	8
LINK May2013			25% 2	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	25% 2	8

Q24 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you looked after a person's plants, mail pets while they were away?

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
LINK Feb2013				25% 2	37.50% 3	37.50% 3	8
LINK May2013			12.50% 1	25% 2	50% 4	12.50% 1	8

Q25 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you carried a stranger's belongings, like groceries, a suitcase, or shopping bag?

LINK Feb2013			12.50% 1	37.50% 3	25% 2	25% 2	8
LINK May2013		12.50% 1		50% 4	25% 2	12.50% 1	8

Q26 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you given directions to a stranger?

LINK Feb2013			25% 2	75% 6			8
LINK May2013			37.50% 3	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	8

Q27 Altruistic Behaviors General: During the past 12 months, how often have you let someone you didn't know well borrow an item of value like dishes or tools?

LINK Feb2013				50% 4	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013				62.50% 5	12.50% 1	25% 2	8

Q28 Altruistic Behaviors Among People You Know: During the past 12 months, how often have you helped someone outside your household with housework or shopping?

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
LINK Feb2013		12.50% 1	37.50% 3	37.50% 3		12.50% 1	8
LINK May2013				62.50% 5	12.50% 1	25.% 2	8

Q29 Altruistic Behaviors Among People You Know: During the past 12 months, how often have you lent quite a bit of money to another person?

LINK Feb2013				25% 2	37.50% 3	37.50% 3	8
LINK May2013				50% 4	25% 2	25.% 2	8

Q30 Altruistic Behaviors Among People You Know: During the past 12 months, how often have you spent time talking with someone who was a bit down or depressed?

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
LINK Feb2013	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	37.50% 3		12.50% 1		8
LINK May2013	25% 2	50% 4	25% 2				8

Q31 Altruistic Behaviors Among People You Know: During the past 12 months how often have you helped somebody to find a job?

LINK Feb2013			12.50% 1	37.50% 3		50% 4	8
LINK May2013			12.50% 1	25% 2	25% 2	37.50% 3	8

APPENDIX D

PHILANTHROPY PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

PHILANTHROPY PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST
Developed by Cinda L. Swan

PRE-TEST SELF-SURVEY QUESTION

1. A LINK common purse will be established for meeting human need. For every $1 dollar you pledge to contribute, $2 will be donated by an anonymous philanthropist.

   I _____ pledge $ _____ of dollars each month to the LINK Common Purse for the 2013 months of February, March, April.

POST-TEST SELF-SURVEY QUESTION

1. Did contributing to a LINK common purse and exposure to human need and teaching about voluntary simplicity cause you to adapt your spending habits in any way during the project? If yes, describe. If no, explain.

2. Hypothetical Case Scenario:

   You have been given the opportunity and have chosen to continue to participate in LINK Common Purse for the next three months of May, June, July of 2013.

   A LINK common purse will be established for meeting human need. For every $1 dollar you pledge to contribute, $2 will be donated by an anonymous philanthropist.

I _____ pledge $ _____ of dollars each month to the LINK common purse for the 2013 months of May, June, July.

APPENDIX E

SIMPLICITY SCALE

SIMPLICITY SCALE
Developed by Cinda L. Swan

	Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
Recycling				
• Plastic				
• Paper				
• Cardboard				
• Newspapers				
• Magazines				
• Glass				
• Cans				
• Batteries				
• Cell Phones				
• Laptops/Computers				
Energy Conservation				
• Car-pooling				
• Walking				
• Biking				
• LoweringThermostat in Winter				
• Raising Thermostat in Summer				
Water Conservation				
• Washing Dishes by Hand				
• Dishwasher				
• Bath				
• Shower				
Sustainability				
• Clothesline				
• Dryer				
• Paper Plates/Cups				
• Dinner Plates/Cups				
• Spend Extra for Locally Grown Produce or Fair-Trade				
• Personal Shopping Bag				
• Plastic Grocery Bags				

APPENDIX F

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN SIMPLICITY

BEHAVIORS LINK SPRING 2013

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN SIMPLICITY BEHAVIORS LINK SPRING 2013

	% Increase in Always or Sometimes Simplicity Behaviors
Recycling	
• Plastic	100.0%
• Paper	25.0%
• Cardboard	12.5%
• Newspapers	12.5%
• Magazines	12.5%
• Glass	0.0%
• Cans	62.5%
• Batteries	12.5%
• Cell Phones	12.5%
• Laptops/Computers	12.5%
Energy Conservation	
• Car-pooling	25.0%
• Walking	12.5%
• Biking	12.5%
• Lowering Thermostat in Winter	25.0%
• Raising Thermostat in Summer	12.5%
Water Conservation	
• Washing Dishes by Hand	Usage increase by 0.0%
• Dishwasher	Usage decrease by 37.5%
• Bath	Usage decrease by 25.0%
• Shower	Usage increase by 0.0%
Sustainability	
• Clothesline	37.5%
• China Plates	12.5%
• Glass	25.0%
• Spend Extra for Locally Grown Produce or Fair Trade	12.5%
• Personal Shopping Bag	37.5%

APPENDIX G

WEEKLY SELF-REPORTING FORM

WEEKLY SELF-REPORTING FORM
Developed by Cinda L. Swan

LINK Spring 2013

Weekly
Self Reporting #__

Student: _____ Date: _____

Goal: To provide the participant with an opportunity to reflect on the material presented in the classroom setting.

1. What topics were presented in this past Monday's program?

2. Describe what you think is most important about this topic:

3. How does what you describe above affect your behavior?

2nd Mile Question: Did anyone ask something of you and you gave that and more? Explain.

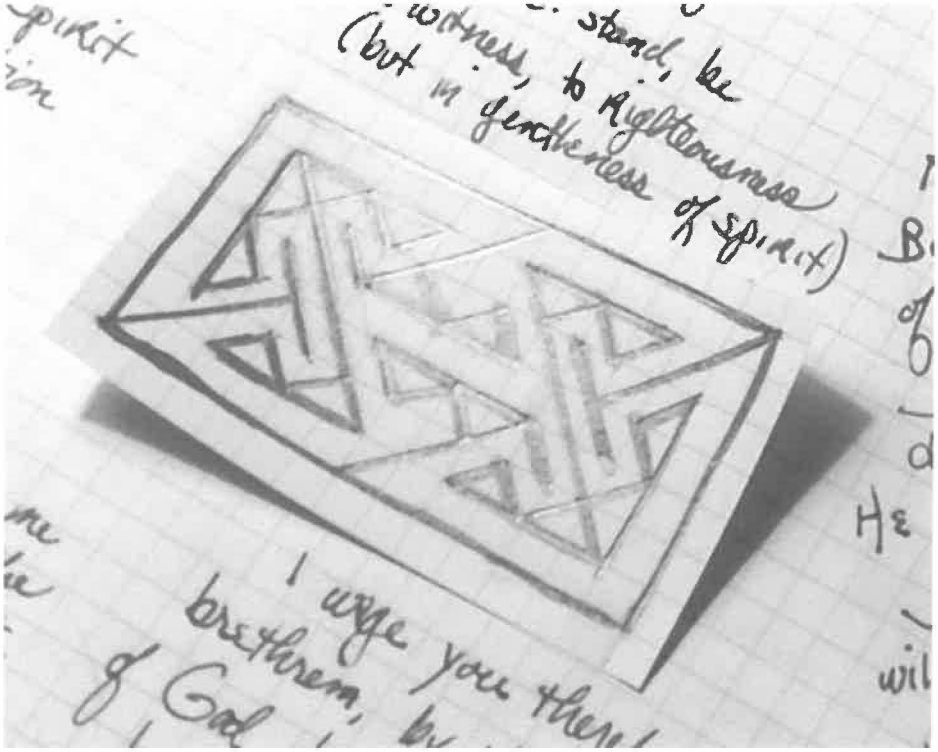
Joy Factor Quotient: On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your Joy Factor Quotient in light of the above 2nd mile incident(s):

Irritated/Bothered at Being Asked				Joyful Freedom To Sacrifice/Serve
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX H

LINK CELTIC SYMBOL

LINK Celtic Symbol



Celtic Art in Bronze Ink on Background of Scriptural Prayers

The interlacing pattern of the Celtic symbol above can be traced eternally without end. This picture came to be associated with LINK and was used on all LINK communications, table placement cards, and notecards.

APPENDIX I

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM COST OF POVERTY EXPERIENCE

AND RAPTOR REHABILITATION OF KENTUCKY INC

Photos from March 21, 2013 Cost of Poverty Experience

Eighty-two students, faculty, and staff participated in COPE.

Campus Pastor Carol Weddle as "Larry" of Larry's Rental and Mortgage.

Rev. Bill Davenport and student as Pistol Pete at E-Z Pete's Pawn Shop.

RROKI April 17, 2013 at Lindsey Wilson College

Red Tailed Hawk

Saw Whet Owl

Students gather to admire and ask questions about the Great Horned Owl, Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Saw Whet Owl, and Barn Owl.

APPENDIX J

SPRING 2013 LINK ACTIVITIES RATING

Spring 2013 LINK Activities Rating

Name: _____

1. Starting with number one "1" as having the greatest impact, rate the following LINK activities on a descending scale of 1 through 9 in the order of what you consider to have had the greatest impact on your thinking and behavior:

In Order of Top Four Most Impacting Activities

No. of Girls/Total Responses

8/8 Weekly time of group worship and prayer

6/8 Cost of Poverty Experience simulation

5/8 Times of teaching and small group discipleship mentoring

5/7 Retreat weekend and bonding together with others

3/8 Creation Care emphasis with Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky

2/8 $12 Simplicity Challenge

2/8 Community Purse

1/8 Sharing a weekly meal together

Other: 1/8 Weekly Prayer Partner

2. Has your thinking and/or behavior changed as a result of participation in the LINK experience? If so, please describe.

3. May I have your permission to contact you if I should need to do any further follow up at the request of my doctoral committee?

Yes 8/8 No ____

APPENDIX K

COPE SURVEY RESPONSES

COST OF POVERTY EXPERIENCE SURVEY
LINDSEY WILSON COLLEGE
MARCH 21, 2013
SURVEY CREATED BY THINK TANK, INC.

1. Please answer the questions below in order to provide assistance with the continual improvement of the Cost of Poverty experience: Were you a child or adult in the simulation experience? (60 answered this question)

		Response Count
Child	23.3%	14
Adult	76.7%	46

2. What level of impact did the simulation experience have for you? (60 answered this question)

No Impact	0.0%	0
Some Impact	40.0%	24
Significant Impact	60.0%	36

3. For each item below, please indicate if you have a greater understanding of the issue due to the simulation experience: (60 answered this question)

	% of Those Who Marked Greater Understanding
1. Understanding of barriers that exist for low income families:	93.3% (56)
2. Understanding of decision making process for low income families:	93.3% (56)
3. Understanding of how community resource business interests interacts with families in poverty:	88.3% (53)
4. Understanding of the survival skills needed to get by:	90.0% (54)
5. Understanding of the family interactions between parents and children:	75.0% (45)
6. Understanding of the cycles of poverty and difficulty to break out:	91.5% (54)

4. How has your thinking about the causes of poverty and solutions needed changed as a result of the Cost of Poverty experience? (See responses below)

		Response Count (57 of 60 answered this Q)
N/A Hasn't changed	26.3%	15
Changed my thinking in the following way:	73.7%	42 responses:43 written responses

5. How do you think your behavior will change as a result of the Cost of Poverty experience? (See responses below)

		Response Count (58 of 60 answered this Q)
N/A Hasn't changed	29.3%	17
Likely to change my behavior in the following way:	72.4%	42 responses:38 written responses

6. What do you think was the most successful part of the simulation? — 58 responses*

7. What do you think was the lease successful part of the simulation? — 48 responses*

8. Thank you for taking time to answer this evaluation

*Responses to questions six and seven are not included in this replication of COPE March 21, 2013 Survey results tabulated by Think Tank, Inc.

Q4 How has your thinking about the causes of poverty and solutions needed changed as a result of the Cost of Poverty experience?

1. It's really hard
2. Stress stress stress
3. Makes one wonder about less fortunate
4. Making sacrifices for more important things
5. I understand even without having children it is extremely hard just to survive
6. I understand even without having children it is exactly hard just to serve
7. That my heart should go to the poor
8. By allowing me to see what life would be like in another's shoes
9. I now see the importance of time management and priorities in COPE situations
10. Letting me experience I realize how hard living in poverty is
11. I think more people need to help
12. Be better
13. I knew what to do i have done it most my life
14. It changed my awareness of the need for a solution because just working doesn't always do it
15. Previous awareness
16. We need people that truly care about those in poverty and they need to be passionate in order to affect change
17. I can see more clearly how hard it is for a family to get out of poverty and how easy it is for a family to continue the cycle
18. People really live like this. I couldn't imagine living like that
19. The odds are certainly stacked against those in poverty. A new challenge at every turn. Stressful. I felt very helpless and defeated
20. Some people are trying
21. It is difficult to budget
22. I realize exactly how hard it is now, and how some families have to wait until the end of the month to pay everything
23. It seems much harder
24. Made me realize that living in poverty is harder than I thought
25. I realize the non-ending struggle that poverty causes a family to be in bondage to
26. It would be hard to break out of the cycle when you don't have enough money to get by
27. Felt helpless not being able to get a job
28. Through this experience I have been opened to how hard it is to get out of the cycle of poverty
29. I am a socialist
30. I realized how much harder it was to prioritize money when there just is not enough for everything and how hard it would be to rise above it for good
31. There was a serious struggle. I saw my "Mom" work really hard and we still couldn't make it. I realize now that there are some families who try but stillstruggle
32. Understanding the reality
33. By causing me to realize how much time, thinking, stress and struggles that people in poverty have to go through
34. It has been a very interesting experience. I can see poverty is hard to break cycle
35. Realizing how complicated life can be; living with a sense of urgency
36. How difficult it is to do daily tasks because the limits of time and money
37. Getting out of poverty would be way harder then one might think
38. Somehow one has to break the cycle. I didn't realize before the cycle that is so hard to break. This simulation definitely put that into perspective for me. Let's me know it's not just their own fault always
39. I help from time to time but I think it has strengthen my belief for being called to help with youth living below the poverty line. This is how it changed my thinking
40. Need to organize to pay what was due
41. More people need to know that this is real and everyday life for some people
42. Not enough time in a day, people are greedy (upper classes)
43. I understand that it is a lot harder to come out of poverty than I first thought

Q5 How do you think your behavior will change as a result of the Cost of Poverty experience?

1. Be more grateful
2. Sensitivity
3. Thinking more of the less fortunate
4. Helping out a lot more
5. When I see someone in need I will help
6. I will be more willing to help if I can
7. More understanding
8. More service work
9. Be more understanding of those in poverty
10. Become more privy to the sensitivity of the issue
11. I will be more aware of my financial decisions and obligations
12. Made me more aware of struggles and stress poverty causes
13. Be more grateful for the opportunities that I have
14. Better understanding that will result in more grace merry and kindness
15. It won't change much because I know people who have gone through those situations
16. How I look at people in poverty
17. I will not take the life I have for granted. Get involved more
18. I am now more aware of the lives of families in poverty and will try to be more supportive of organizations that care for these families
19. I understood the difficulty in not finding a job
20. Great respect for impoverished people
21. Be more conscience about the priorities when it comes to decisions concerning paying bills. Overall, I will be more understanding towards the low-incomepopulation
22. I am a socialist
23. Not assuming impoverished people are simply not trying hard enough
24. I want to do more for those who are poor
25. More understanding towards the needy
26. Through causing me to help those who are less off
27. Being more empathetic
28. Be more mindful of the struggle of those who live in poverty
29. Greater appreciation and longing to help
30. More compassion, more giving
31. Be more sympathetic to those in need, try to help them when given opportunity
32. I want to help break the cycle and see people have more opportunities
33. Want to help people more with finances or abilities
34. I think that I will be more driven to help on a regular basis, instead of mission trips. This is how it changed my behavior
35. Better spending habits
36. To help others more
37. More humble
38. Continue to love my friends and people I meet in poverty

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